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H2838 -0002

OFFICE OF CHIEF OF COUNSEL FOR WAR CRIMES

EVIDENCE DIVISION

Date: 19 July 1948

I certify that Document Number L-22 was introduced into evidence as Exhibit Number USA-294 in the Trial by the International Tribunal of Hermann GOERING, et al., which commenced on 20 November 1945, and that the attached photostat is a true and correct copy of the original.

Fred Niebergall

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Chief, Document Control Branch

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C E R T I F I C A T E

I hereby certify that the annexed document L-22 No. USA-294 is a photostat of an original document submitted in evidence by the United States Prosecution under this number. The original document has been withdrawn in accordance with Rule 10 of the International Military Tribunal, and to the best of my knowledge and belief is to be held at the National Archives, Washington D.C. .

Nuremberg, 28 June 1948

Paul Joosten

PAUL A. JOOSTEN

General Secretary
International Military
Tribunal

USA 294

CERTIFICATE

I, Carl R. Blumenstein, 1st Lt. , AC, Chief, Field Branch, Documentation Division, do hereby certify that the documents known as: U S A Exhibits : 59, 65, 70, 78, 265, 294, and 644 (also by the OCC designations as: L- 273, 150, 151, 292; PS- 2709 ; L- 22, 104 resp.) are photostatic copies of U.S. Department of State Dispatches, which were received by this office through normal documentary channels (as stated in the Coogan Affidavit - U S A Exhibit No. 1) from the United Nations War Crimes Commission, London, in the Fall of 1945. To the best of my knowledge the originals of these documents are held in the archives of the U.S. Department of State, Washington, D.C.

The above mentioned documents, as such, therefore fall into the category of documentary evidence set forth in Article 21, of The Charter of the International Military Tribunal which states "... shall also take judicial notice of official documents (governmental) and reports of the United Nations.. ".

Nurnberg, 8 May 1946

Carl R Blumenstein

CARL R. BLUMENSTEIN,
1st Lt. AC,
Chief, Field Branch
Documentation Division

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H2838 – 0005

EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT
WAR REFUGEE BOARD
WASHINGTON, D. C.

GERMAN EXTERMINATION CAMPS — AUSCHWITZ AND BIRKENAU

It is a fact beyond denial that the Germans have deliberately and systematically murdered millions of innocent civilians — Jews and Christians alike — all over Europe. This campaign of terror and brutality, which is unprecedented in all history and which even now continues unabated, is part of the German plan to subjugate the free peoples of the world.

So revolting and diabolical are the German atrocities that the minds of civilized people find it difficult to believe that they have actually taken place. But the governments of the United States and of other countries have evidence which clearly substantiates the facts.

The War Refugee Board is engaged in a desperate effort to save as many as possible of Hitler's intended victims. To facilitate its work the Board has representatives in key spots in Europe. These representatives have tested contacts throughout Europe and keep the Board fully advised concerning the German campaign of extermination and torture.

Recently the Board received from a representative close to the scene two eye-witness accounts of events which occurred in notorious extermination camps established by the Germans. The first report is based upon the experiences of two young Slovakian Jews who escaped in April, 1944 after spending two years in the Nazi concentration camps at Auschwitz and Birkenau in southwestern Poland. The second report is made by a non-Jewish Polish major, the only survivor of one group imprisoned at Auschwitz.

The two reports were prepared independently and are reproduced exactly in the form they were received by the War Refugee Board, except for a few deletions necessary for the protection of persons who may still be alive. The figures concerning the size of the Jewish convoys and the numbers of men and women admitted to the two camps cannot be taken as mathematically exact; and, in fact, are declared by the authors to be no more than reliable approximations. They are accepted as such by the Board.

The Board has every reason to believe that these reports present a true picture of the frightful happenings in these camps. It is making the reports public in the firm conviction that they should be read and understood by all Americans.

A 090088

November, 1944

H2838 - 0006

No. 1

THE EXTERMINATION CAMPS OF AUSCHWITZ (Oswiecim)

and BIRKENAU

in Upper Silesia.

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H2838 - 0007

FOREWORD

Two young Slovak Jews - whose names will not be disclosed for the time being in the interest of their own safety - have been fortunate enough to escape after spending two years in the concentration camps of BIRKENAU, AUSCHWITZ and LUBLIN-MAJDANEK, where they had been deported in 1942 from SLOVAKIA.

One of them was sent on April 13, 1942 from the assembly camp of SERED directly to AUSCHWITZ and then to BIRKENAU, while the other was sent from the camp of NOVAKY to LUBLIN on June 14, 1942 and, after a short stay there, transferred to AUSCHWITZ and, later, to BIRKENAU.

The following report does not contain everything these two men experienced during their captivity, but only what one or both together underwent, heard, or experienced at first hand. No individual impressions or judgments are recorded and nothing passed on from hearsay.

The report starts with the story of the young Jew who was removed from SERED. The account of his experiences in BIRKENAU begins at the time the second Jew arrived there and is, therefore, based on the statements of both. Then follows the individual narrative of the second Jew who was sent from NOVAKY to LUBLIN and from there to AUSCHWITZ.

The declarations tally with all the trustworthy yet fragmentary reports hitherto received, and the dates given with regard to transports to various camps agree with the official records. These statements can, therefore, be considered as entirely credible.

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I. AUSCHWITZ AND BIRKENAU

On the 13th April, 1942 our group, consisting of 1,000 men, was loaded into railroad cars at the assembly camp of SERED. The doors were shut so that nothing would reveal the direction of the journey, and when they were opened after a long while we realized that we had crossed the Slovak frontier and were in ZWARDON. The train had until then been guarded by Hlinka men, but was now taken over by SS guards. After a few of the cars had been uncoupled from our convoy, we continued on our way arriving at night at AUSCHWITZ, where we stopped on a sidetrack. The reason the other cars were left behind was apparently the lack of room at AUSCHWITZ. They joined us, however, a few days later. Upon arrival we were placed in rows of five and counted. There were 643 of us. After a walk of about 20 minutes with our heavy packs (we had left Slovakia well equipped), we reached the concentration camp of AUSCHWITZ.

We were at once led into a huge barrack where on the one side we had to deposit all our luggage and on the other side completely undress, leaving our clothes and valuables behind. Naked, we then proceeded to an adjoining barrack where our heads and bodies were shaved and disinfected with lysol. At the exit every man was given a number which began with 28,600 in consecutive order. With this number in hand we were then herded to a third barrack where so-called registration took place. This consisted of tattooing the numbers we had received in the second barrack on the left side of our chests. The extreme brutality with which this was effected made many of us faint. The particulars of our identity were also recorded. Then we were led in groups of a hundred into a cellar, and later to a barrack where we were issued striped prisoners' clothes and wooden clogs. This lasted until 10 a.m. In the afternoon our prisoners' outfits were taken away from us again and replaced by the ragged and dirty remains of Russian uniforms. Thus equipped we were marched off to BIRKENAU.

AUSCHWITZ is a concentration camp for political prisoners under so-called "protective custody." At the time of my arrival, that is in April of 1942, there were about 15,000 prisoners in the camp, the majority of whom were Poles, Germans, and civilian Russians under protective custody. A small number of prisoners came under the categories of criminals and "work-shirkers."

AUSCHWITZ camp headquarters controls at the same time the work-camp of BIRKENAU as well as the farm labor camp of HARMENSE. All the prisoners arrive first at AUSCHWITZ where they are provided with prisoners' immatriculation numbers and then are either kept there, sent to BIRKENAU or, in very samll numbers, to HARMENSE. The prisoners receive consecutive numbers upon arrival. Every number is only used once so that the last number

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always corresponds to the number of prisoners actually in the camp. At the time of our escape, that is to say at the beginning of April, 1944, the number had risen up to 180,000. At the outset the numbers were tattooed on the left breast, but later, due to their becoming blurred, on the left forearm.

All prisoners, irrespective of category or nationality, are treated the same. However, to facilitate identification, they are distinguished by various coloured triangles sewed on the clothing on the left breast under the immatriculation number. The first letter indicates the nationality of the prisoner. This letter (for instance "P" for Poles) appears in the middle of the triangle. The coloured triangles have the following meaning:

red triangle	political prisoners under protective custody
green "	professional criminals
black "	"dodgers" (labor slackers), "anti-socials" (mostly Russians)
pink "	homosexuals
violet "	members of the religious sect of "Bibelforscher"

The Jewish prisoners differ from the Aryan prisoners in that their triangle (which in the majority of cases is red) is turned into a David's star by adding yellow points.

Within the enclosure of the camp of AUSCHWITZ there are several factories: a war production plant, Deutscher Aufrüstungswerk (DAW), a factory belonging to the KRUPP works and one to the SIEMENS concern. Outside the boundary of the camp is a tremendous plant covering several square kilometers named "BUNA." The prisoners work in all the aforementioned factories.

The prisoners' actual living quarters, if such a term may at all be used, inside the camp proper cover an area of approximately 500 by 300 meters surrounded by a double row of concrete posts about 3 meters high which are connected (both inside and outside) with one another by a dense netting of high-tension wires fixed into the posts by insulators. Between these two rows of posts, at intervals of 150 meters, there are 5 meters high watchtowers, equipped with machine guns and searchlights. In front of the inner high-tension circle there is further an ordinary wire fence. Merely touching this fence is answered by a stream of bullets from the watchtowers. This system is called "the small or inner chain of sentry posts." The camp itself is composed of three rows of houses. Between the first and second

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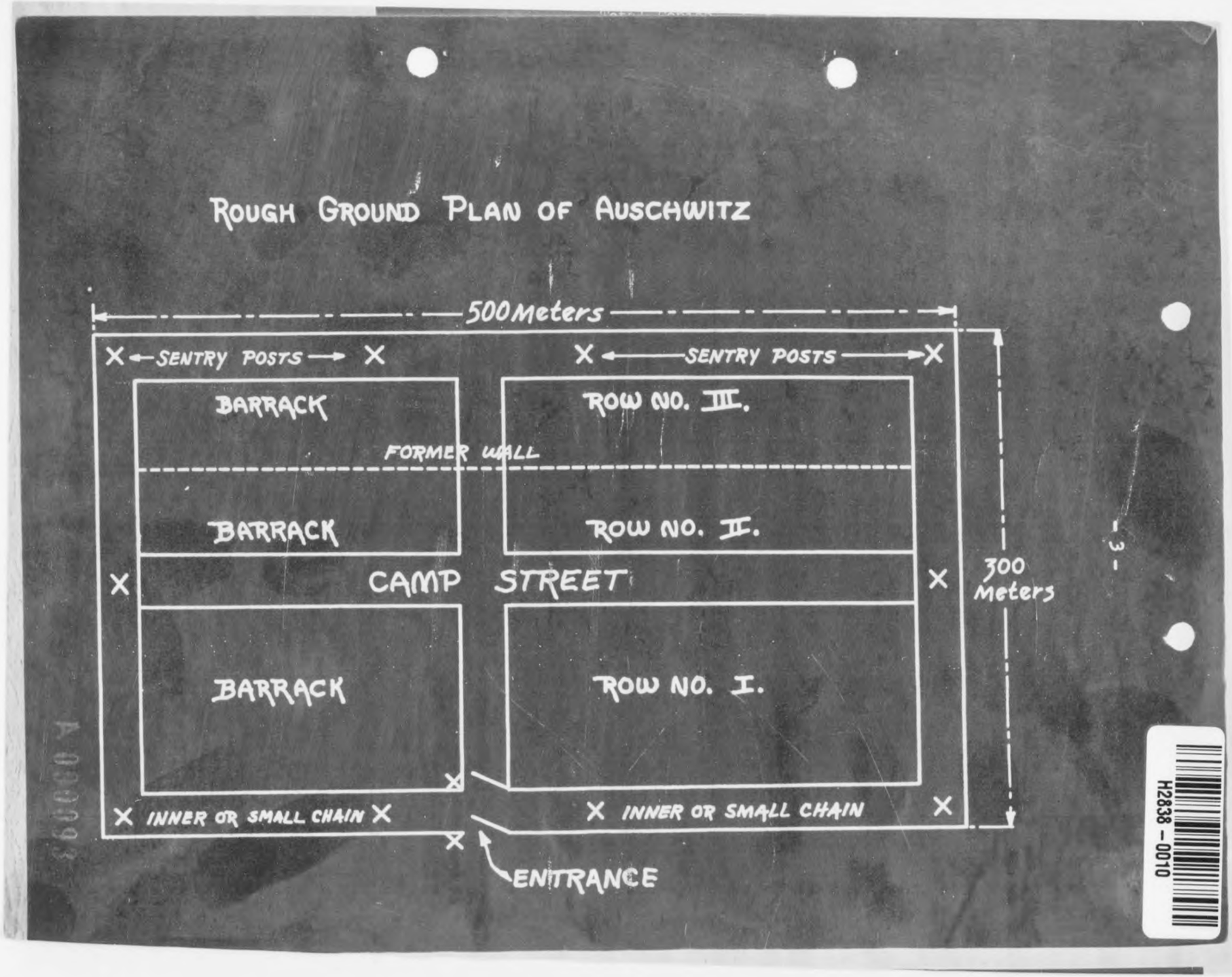

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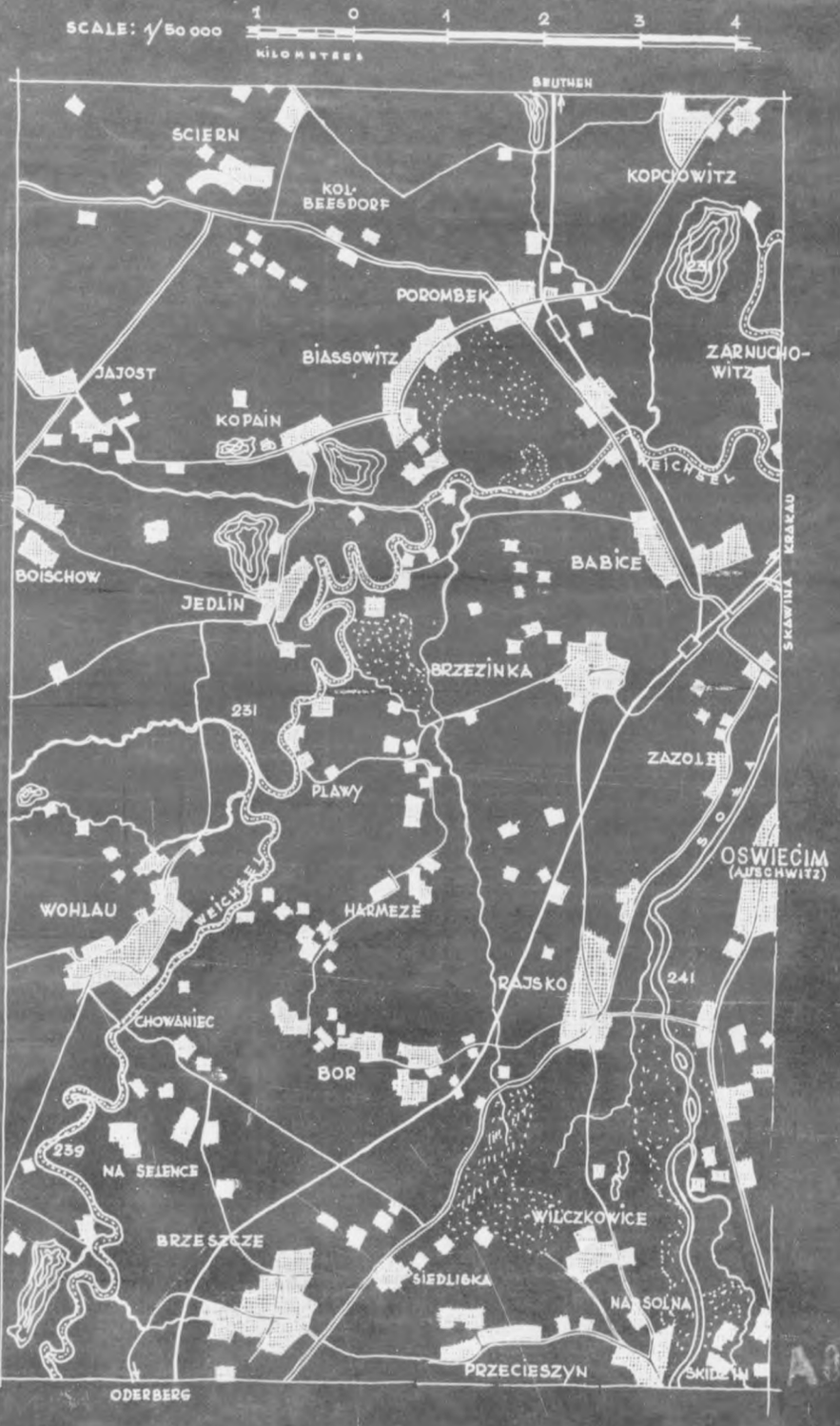

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row is the camp street, and between the second and third there used to be a wall. The Jewish girls deported from Slovakia in March and April, 1942, over 7,000 of them, lived in the houses separated by this wall up to the middle of August, 1942. After these girls had been removed to BIRKENAU, the wall between the second and third row of houses was removed. The camp entry road cuts across the row of houses, while over the entrance gate, which is of course always heavily guarded, stands the ironic inscription: "Work brings freedom."

At a radius of some 2,000 meters the whole camp is encircled by a second line called "the big or outer chain of sentry posts" also with watchtowers every 150 meters. Between the inner and outer chain of sentry posts are the factories and other workshops. The towers of the inner chain are only manned at night when the high-tension current is switched into the double row of wires. During daytime the garrison of the inner chain of sentry posts is withdrawn, and the men take up duty in the outer chain. Escape through these sentry posts - and many attempts have been made - is practically impossible. Getting through the inner circle of posts at night is completely impossible, and the towers of the outer chain are so close to one another (one every 150 meters, i.e. giving each tower a sector with a 75-meter radius to watch) that approaching unnoticed is out of the question. The guards shoot without warning. The garrison of the outer chain is withdrawn at twilight, but only after it has been ascertained that all the prisoners are within the inner circle. If the roll call reveals that a prisoner is missing, sirens immediately sound the alarm.

The men in the outer chain remain in their towers on the lookout, the inner chain is manned, and a systematic search is begun by hundreds of SS guards and bloodhounds. The siren brings the whole surrounding countryside to a state of alarm, so that if by miracle the escapee has been successful in getting through the outer chain he is nearly certain to be caught by one of the numerous German police and SS patrols. The escapee is furthermore handicapped by his clean-shaven head, his striped prisoner's outfit or red patches sewn on his clothing, and the passiveness of the thoroughly intimidated inhabitants. The mere fact of neglecting to give information on the whereabouts of a prisoner, not to speak of extending help, is punished by death. Provided that the prisoner has not been caught sooner, the garrison of the outer chain of sentry posts remains on the watch for three days and nights after which delay it is presumed that the escapee has succeeded in breaking through the double circle. The following night the outer guard is withdrawn. If the escapee is caught alive, he is hanged in the presence of the whole camp; but if he is found dead, his body - wherever it may have been located - is

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brought back to camp (it is easy to identify the corpse by means of the tattooed number) and seated at the entrance gate, a small notice clasped in his hands, reading: "Here I am." During our two years' imprisonment many attempts to escape were made by prisoners but, with the exception of two or three, all were brought back dead or alive. It is not known whether the two or three escapees who were not caught actually managed to get away. It can, however, be asserted that among the Jews who were deported from SLOVAKIA to AUSCHWITZ or BIRKENAU we are the only two who were lucky enough to save ourselves.

As stated previously, we were transferred from AUSCHWITZ to BIRKENAU on the day of our arrival.

Actually there is no such district as BIRKENAU. Even the word BIRKENAU is new in that it has been "adopted" from the nearby Birch Forest (BREZINSKY). The district now called BIRKENAU was, and is still, called "RAJSKA" by the local population. The existing camp center of BIRKENAU lies 4 kilometers distant from AUSCHWITZ. The outer control zones of both BIRKENAU and AUSCHWITZ meet and are merely separated by a railway track. We never found anything out about NEW-BERUN, probably about 30 to 40 kilometers away which, oddly enough, we had to indicate as postal district for BIRKENAU.

At the time of our arrival in BIRKENAU we found there only one huge kitchen for 15,000 people and three stone buildings, two of which were completed and one under construction. The buildings were surrounded by an ordinary barbed wire fence. The prisoners were housed in these buildings and in others later constructed. All are built according to a standard model. Each house is about 30 meters long and 8 to 10 meters wide. Whereas the height of the walls hardly exceeds 2 meters, the roof is disproportionately high - about 5 meters - so that the house gives the impression of a stable surmounted by a large hayloft. There is no inner ceiling, so that the room reaches a height of 7 meters in the center; in other words the pointed roofing rests directly on the four walls. The room is divided in two by a partition running its whole length down the middle and fitted with an opening to enable communication between the two parts thus separated. Along both side walls, as well as along the middle partition, two parallel floors, some 80 centimeters apart, have been built which are in turn divided into small cells by vertical partitions. Thus there are three floors: the ground floor and the two built in the side walls. Normally three people live in each cubicle. As can be judged from the dimensions indicated, these cubicles are too narrow for a man to lie stretched out and not high enough for him to sit upright.

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There is no question of having enough space to stand upright. In this way some 400 to 500 people are accommodated in one house or "block," as they are also called.

The present camp of BIRKENAU covers an area of some 1,600 by 500 meters which is surrounded - similar to AUSCHWITZ - by a so-called small or inner chain of sentry posts. Work is now proceeding on a still larger compound which is to be added later on to the already existing camp. The purpose of this extensive planning is not known to us.

Within a radius of 2 kilometers, as with AUSCHWITZ, BIRKENAU is also surrounded by an outer chain of sentry posts with the same type of watch system as at AUSCHWITZ.

The buildings we found on our arrival had been erected by 12,000 Russian prisoners of war brought there in December, 1941. In severe winter weather they had to work under inhuman conditions as a result of which most of them, with the exception of a small number employed in the kitchen, died of exposure. They were numbered from 1 to 12,000 in a series which had no connection with the ordinary camp-numbering system previously described. Whenever fresh convoys of Russian prisoners arrived, they were not issued the current AUSCHWITZ prisoner numbers, but received those of deceased Russians in the 1 to 12,000 series. It is, therefore, difficult to estimate how many prisoners of this category passed through the camp. Apparently Russians were transferred to AUSCHWITZ or BIRKENAU on disciplinary grounds from regular prisoner-of-war camps. We found what remained of the Russians in a terrible state of destitution and neglect living in the unfinished building without the slightest protection against cold or rain. They died "en masse." Hundreds and thousands of their bodies were buried superficially, spreading a stench of pestilence. Later we had to exhume and burn the corpses.

A week before our arrival in AUSCHWITZ the first group of Jews reached the camp; (the women were dealt with separately and received numbers parallel to those of the men; the Slovak women received serial numbers from 1 to 8,000) 1,320 naturalized French Jews from Paris. They were numbered from 27,500 onwards. It is clear, therefore, that between this French group and our convoy no other men arrived in AUSCHWITZ, since we have already pointed out that our numbers started with 28,600. We found the 700 French Jews who were still alive in terrible condition, the missing 600 having died within a week after their arrival.

The following categories were housed in the three completed buildings:

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I. The so-called "prominencia": professional criminals and older Polish political prisoners who were in charge of the administration of the camp.

II. The remainder of the French Jews, namely some 700.

III. The 643 original Slovak Jews to whom were added a few days later those who had been left at ZWARDON.

IV. Those Russians who were still alive and housed in the unfinished building as well as in the open air and whose numbers diminished so rapidly that as a group they are scarcely worth mentioning.

Together with the remaining Russian prisoners the Slovak Jews worked at the construction of buildings, whereas the French Jews had to do spade work. After three days I was ordered, together with 200 other Slovak Jews, to work in the German armament factories at AUSCHWITZ, but we continued to be housed in BIRKENAU. We left early in the morning returning at night and worked in the carpentry shop as well as on road construction. Our food consisted of one litre of turnip soup at midday and 300 grams of bad bread in the evening. Working conditions were inconceivably hard, so that the majority of us, weakened by starvation and the inedible food, could not stand it. The mortality was so high that every day our group of 200 had 30 to 35 dead. Many were simply beaten to death by the overseers - the "Capos" - during work, without the slightest provocation. The gaps in our ranks caused by these deaths were replaced daily by prisoners from BIRKENAU. Our return at night was extremely painful and dangerous, as we had to drag along over a distance of 5 kilometers our tools, fire wood, heavy caldrons, and the bodies of those who had died or had been killed during the working day. With these heavy loads we were forced to maintain a brisk pace, and anyone incurring the displeasure of one of the "Capos" was cruelly knocked down, if not beaten to death. Until the arrival of the second group of Slovak men some 14 days later, our original number had dwindled to 150. At night we were counted, the bodies of the dead were piled up on flat, narrow-gauge cars or in a truck and brought to the Birch Forest (BREZINSKY) where they were burned in a trench several meters deep and about 15 meters long. Every day on our way to work we met a working party of 300 Jewish girls from Slovakia who were employed on ground work in the vicinity. They were dressed in old Russian uniform rags and wore wooden clogs. Their heads were shaven and, unfortunately, we could not speak to them.

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Until the middle of May, 1942, a total of four convoys of male Jews from Slovakia arrived at BIRKENAU and all received similar treatment to ours.

From the first and second transports 120 men were chosen (including myself) and placed at the disposal of the administration of the camp of AUSCHWITZ, which was in need of doctors, dentists, intellectuals, and clerks. This group consisted of 90 Slovak and 30 French Jews. As I had in the meantime managed to work my way up to a good position in BIRKENAU - being in command of a group of 50 men, which had brought me considerable advantage - I at first felt reluctant to leave for AUSCHWITZ. However, I was finally persuaded to go and left. After eight days, 18 doctors and attendants as well as three further persons were selected from this group of 120 intellectuals. The doctors were used in the "sick building" or "hospital" at AUSCHWITZ, while we three were sent back to BIRKENAU. My two comrades, Ladislav Braun from Trnava and Gross from Vrbové (?), both of whom have since died, were sent to the Slovak block while I was ordered to the French section where we were employed at collecting "personal data" and at "nursing the sick." The remaining 99 persons were sent to work in the gravel pit where they all died within a short time.

Shortly thereafter a so-called "sick-building" (Krankenbau) was set up. It was destined to become the much dreaded "Block 7" where at first I was chief attendant and later administrator. The chief of this "infirmary" was a Pole. Actually this building was nothing else than an assembly centre for death candidates. All prisoners incapable of working were sent there. There was no question of any medical attention or care. We had some 150 dead daily and their bodies were sent for cremation to AUSCHWITZ.

At the same time the so-called "selections" were introduced. Twice weekly, Mondays and Thursdays, the camp doctor indicated the number of prisoners who were to be gassed and then burned. These "selectees" were loaded into trucks and brought to the Birch Forest. Those still alive upon arrival were gassed in a big barrack erected near the trench used for burning the bodies. The weekly "draft" in dead from "Block 7" was about 2,000, of whom 1,200 died of "natural death" and about 800 through "selection." For those who had <u>not</u> been "selected" a death certificate was issued and sent to the central administration at ORANIENBURG, whereas for the "selectees" a special register was kept with the indication "S.B." ("Sonderbehandelt" - special treatment). Until January 15, 1943, up to which time I was administrator of "Block 7" and therefore in a position to directly observe happenings, some 50,000 prisoners died of "natural death" or by "selection."

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As previously described, the prisoners were numbered consecutively so that we are able to reconstruct fairly clearly their order of succession and the fate which befell each separate convoy on arrival.

The first male Jewish transport reaching AUSCHWITZ for BIRKENAU was composed, as mentioned, of 1,320 naturalized French Jews bearing approximately the following numbers:

27,400 - 28,600
28,600 - 29,600 In April, 1942 the first convoy of Slovak Jews (our convoy).

29,600 - 29,700 100 men (Aryans) from various concentration camps.

29,700 - 32,700 3 complete convoys of Slovak Jews.

32,700 - 33,100 400 professional criminals (Aryans) from Warsaw prisons.

33,100 - 35,000 1,900 Jews from Cracow.

35,000 - 36,000 1,000 Poles (Aryans) - political prisoners.

36,000 - 37,300 In May, 1942 - 1,300 Slovak Jews from LUBLIN-MAJDANEK.

37,300 - 37,900 600 Poles (Aryans) from RADOM, amongst them a few Jews.

37,900 - 38,000 100 Poles from the concentration camp of DACHAU.

38,000 - 38,400 400 French naturalized Jews who arrived with their families.

This whole convoy consisted of about 1,600 individuals of whom approximately 200 girls and 400 men were admitted to the camp, while the remaining 1,000 persons (women, old people, children as well as men) were sent without further procedure from the railroad siding directly to the Birch Forest, and there gassed and burned. From this moment on all Jewish convoys were dealt with in the same manner. Approximately 10 percent of the men and 5 percent of the women were allotted to the camps and the remaining members were immediately gassed. This process of extermination had already been applied earlier to the Polish Jews. During long months, without interruption, trucks brought thousands of Jews from the various "ghettos" direct to the pit in the "Birkenwald."

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38,400 - 39,200	800 naturalized French Jews, the remainder of the convoy was - as previously described - gassed.
39,200 - 40,000	800 Poles (Aryans), political prisoners.
40,000 - 40,150	150 Slovak Jews with their families. Outside of a group of 50 girls sent to the women's camp, all other members were gassed in the Birch Forest. Among the 150 men who came to camp there were a certain Zucker (Christian name unknown) and Sonnenschein, Viliam, both from Eastern Slovakia.
40,150 - 43,800	Approximately 4,000 French naturalized Jews, almost all intellectuals; 1,000 women were directed to the women's camp, while the balance of about 3,000 persons were gassed in the usual manner.
43,800 - 44,200	400 Slovak Jews from LUBLIN, including Matej Klein and No. 43820, Meiloch Laufer from Eastern Slovakia. This convoy arrived on June 30, 1942.
44,200 - 45,000	200 Slovak Jews. The convoy consisted of 1,000 persons. A number of women were sent to the women's camp, the rest gassed in the Birch Wood. Among the prisoners sent to camp were: Jozef Zelmanovic, Snina - Adolf Kahan, Bratislava - Walter Reichmann, Sucany - Esther Kahan, Bratislava.
45,000 - 47,000	2,000 Frenchmen (Aryans), communists and other political prisoners, among whom were the brother of Thorez and the young brother of Léon Blum. The latter was atrociously tortured, then gassed and burned.
47,000 - 47,500	500 Jews from Holland, in the majority German emigrants. The rest of the convoy, about 2,500 persons, gassed.
47,500 - 47,800	About 300 so-called Russians under protective custody.

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48,300 - 48,620 320 Jews from Slovakia. About 70 girls were transferred to the women's camp, the remainder, some 650 people, gassed in the Birch Wood. This convoy included about 80 people who had been handed over by the Hungarian police to the camp of SERED. Others from this convoy were: Dr. Zoltan Mandel (since deceased) - Holz (Christian name unknown), butcher from Piestany, Miklos Engel, Zilina - Chaim Katz, Snina, (his wife and 6 children were gassed).

49,000 - 64,800 15,000 naturalized French, Belgian, and Dutch Jews. This figure certainly represents less than 10 percent of the total convoy. This was between July 1 and September 15, 1942. Large family convoys arrived from various European countries and were at once directed to the Birch Wood. The special squad ("Sonderkommando") employed for gassing and burning worked in day and night shifts. Hundreds of thousands of Jews were gassed during this period.

64,800 - 65,000 200 Slovak Jews. Out of this transport about 100 women were admitted to the camp, the rest of them gassed and burned. Among the newly arrived were: Ludwig Katz, Zilina - Avri Burger, Bratislava - Poprad (wife dead) - Mikulas Steiner, Povazska Bystrica - Juraj Fried, Trencin - Buchwald - Josef Rosenwasser, Eastern Slovakia - Julius Neuman, Bardejov - Sandor Wertheimer, Vrbove - Misi Wertheimer, Vrbove - Bela Blau, Zilina.

65,000 - 68,000 Naturalized French, Belgian, and Dutch Jews. Not more than 1,000 women were "selected" and sent to the camp. The others, at the lowest estimate 30,000, were gassed.

71,000 - 80,000 Naturalized French, Belgian, and Dutch Jews. The prisoners brought to the camp hardly represent 10 percent of the total transport. A conservative estimate would be that approximately 65,000 to 70,000 persons were gassed.

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On December 17, 1942, the 200 young Slovak Jews, the so-called "special squad" employed in gassing and burning the condemned, were in turn executed at BIRKENAU. They were executed for having planned to mutiny and escape. A Jew betrayed their preparations. This frightful job had to be taken over by a group of 200 Polish Jews who had just arrived at camp from MAKOW.

The men belonging to the "special squad" lived separately. On account of the dreadful smell spread by them, people had but little contact with them. Besides they were always filthy, destitute, half wild and extraordinarily brutal and ruthless. It was not uncommon to see one of them kill another. This was considered by the others a sensation, a change. One simply recorded that number so-and-so had died.

Once I was an eye-witness when a young Polish Jew named Jossel demonstrated "scientific" murder on a Jew in the presence of an SS guard. He used no weapon, merely his bare hands, to kill his victim.

No. 80,000 marks the beginning of the systematic extermination of the Polish ghettos.

80,000 - 85,000 Approximately 5,000 Jews from various ghettos in MLJAWA - MAKOW - ZICHENOW - LOMZA - GRODNO - BIALOSTOK.

For fully 30 days truck-convoys arrived without interruption. Only 5,000 persons were sent to the concentration camp; all the others were gassed at once. The "special squad" worked in two shifts, 24 hours daily and was scarcely able to cope with the gassing and burning. Without exaggerating it may be said that out of these convoys some 80,000 to 90,000 received "special treatment." These transports also brought in a considerable amount of money, valuables, and precious stones.

85,000 - 92,000 6,000 Jews from GRODNO, BIALOSTOK and CRACOW as well as 1,000 Aryan Poles. The majority of the Jewish convoys were directly gassed and daily about 4,000 Jews were driven into the gas chambers.

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During mid-January, 1943 three convoys of 2,000 persons each from THERESIENSTADT arrived. They bore the designations "CU" "CR" and "R." (The meaning of these signs is unknown to us). These markings were also stamped on their luggage. Out of these 6,000 persons only 600 men and 300 women were admitted to the camp. The remainder were gassed.

99,000 - 100,000 End of January, 1943 large convoys of French and Dutch Jews arrived; only a small proportion of them reached the camp.

100,000 - 102,000 In February, 1943, 2,000 Aryan Poles, mostly intellectuals.

102,000 - 103,000 700 Czech Aryans. Later, those still alive were sent to BUCHENWALD.

103,000 - 108,000 3,000 French and Dutch Jews and 2,000 Poles (Aryans).

During the month of February, 1943, two contingents arrived daily. They included Polish, French, and Dutch Jews who, in the main, were sent to the gas chambers. The number gassed during this month can well be estimated at 90,000.

At the end of February, 1943 a new modern crematorium and gassing plant was inaugurated at BIRKENAU. The gassing and burning of the bodies in the Birch Forest was discontinued, the whole job being taken over by the four specially built crematoria. The large ditch was filled in, the ground levelled, and the ashes used as before for fertilizer at the farm labour camp of HERMENSE, so that today it is almost impossible to find traces of the dreadful mass murder which took place here.

At present there are four crematoria in operation at BIRKENAU, two large ones, I and II, and two smaller ones, III and IV. Those of type I and II consist of 3 parts, i.e.: (A) the furnace room; (B) the large hall; and (C) the gas chamber. A huge chimney rises from the furnace room around which are grouped nine furnaces, each having four openings. Each opening can take three normal corpses at once and after an hour and a half the bodies are completely burned. This corresponds to a daily capacity of about 2,000 bodies. Next to this is a large "reception hall" which is arranged so as to give the impression of the antechamber of a bathing establishment. It holds 2,000 people and apparently there is a similar

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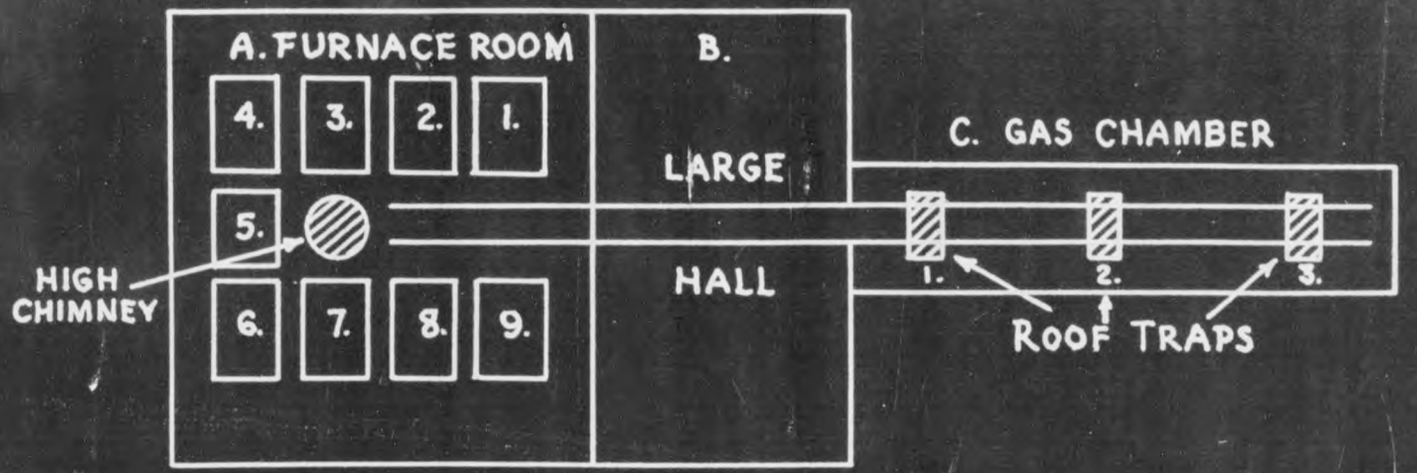

ROUGH GROUND PLAN OF
CREMATORIA: TYPES I & II IN BIRKENAU

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waiting room on the floor below. From there a door and a few steps lead down into the very long and narrow gas chamber. The walls of this chamber are also camouflaged with simulated entries to shower rooms in order to mislead the victims. The roof is fitted with three traps which can be hermetically closed from the outside. A track leads from the gas chamber towards the furnace room. The gassing takes place as follows: the unfortunate victims are brought into hall (B) where they are told to undress. To complete the fiction that they are going to bathe, each person receives a towel and a small piece of soap issued by two men clad in white coats. Then they are crowded into the gas chamber (C) in such numbers that there is, of course, only standing room. To compress this crowd into the narrow space, shots are often fired to induce those already at the far end to huddle still closer together. When everybody is inside, the heavy doors are closed. Then there is a short pause, presumably to allow the room temperature to rise to a certain level, after which SS men with gas masks climb on the roof, open the traps, and shake down a preparation in powder form out of tin cans labelled "CYKLON" "For use against vermin," which is manufactured by a Hamburg concern. It is presumed that this is a "CYANIDE" mixture of some sort which turns into gas at a certain temperature. After three minutes everyone in the chamber is dead. No one is known to have survived this ordeal, although it was not uncommon to discover signs of life after the primitive measures employed in the Birch Wood. The chamber is then opened, aired, and the "special squad" carts the bodies on flat trucks to the furnace rooms where the burning takes place. Crematoria III and IV work on nearly the same principle, but their capacity is only half as large. Thus the total capacity of the four cremating and gassing plants at BIRKENAU amounts to about 6,000 daily.

On principle only Jews are gassed; Aryans very seldom, as they are usually given "special treatment" by shooting. Before the crematoria were put into service, the shooting took place in the Birch Wood and the bodies were burned in the long trench; later, however, executions took place in the large hall of one of the crematoria which has been provided with a special installation for this purpose.

Prominent guests from BERLIN were present at the inauguration of the first crematorium in March, 1943. The "program" consisted of the gassing and burning of 8,000 Cracow Jews. The guests, both officers and civilians, were extremely satisfied with the results and the special peephole fitted into the door of the gas chamber was in constant use. They were lavish in their praise of this newly erected installation.

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109,000 - 119,000 At the beginning of March, 1943, 45,000 Jews arrived from Saloniki. 10,000 of them came to the camp, including a small percentage of the women; some 30,000 however went straight to the cremating establishment. Of the 10,000 nearly all died a short time later from a contagious illness resembling malaria. They also died of typhus due to the general conditions prevailing in the camp.

Malaria among the Jews and typhus took such toll among the prisoners in general that the "selections" were temporarily suspended. The contaminated Greek Jews were ordered to present themselves and in spite of our repeated warnings many of them did. They were all killed by intracardial phenol injections administered by a lance-corporal of the medical corps.

Out of the 10,000 Greek Jews, some 1,000 men remained alive and were later sent, together with 500 other Jews, to do fortification work in Warsaw. A few weeks later several hundred came back in a pitiful state and were immediately gassed. The remainder presumably died in Warsaw. Four hundred Greek Jews suffering from malaria were sent for "further treatment" to LUBLIN after the phenol injections had been stopped, and it appears that they actually arrived. Their fate is not known to us, but it can be taken for granted that out of the original number of 10,000 Jews not one eventually remained in the camp.

Simultaneously with the stopping of the "selections" the murdering of prisoners was forbidden. Prominent murderers such as: the Reich German professional criminals Alexander Neumann, Zimmer, Albert Haemmerle, Rudi Osteringer, Rudi Bechert, and the political prisoners Alfred Kien and Alois Stahler, were punished for repeated murder and had to make written declaration that they had killed so and so many prisoners.

At the beginning of 1943 the political section of AUSCHWITZ received 500,000 discharge certificates and we thought with ill-concealed joy, that at least a few of us would be liberated. But the forms were simply filled out with the names of those gassed and filed away in the archives.

119,000 - 120,000 1,000 Poles (Aryans) from the PAWIAK penitentiary in Warsaw.

120,000 - 123,000 3,000 Greek Jews, part of whom were sent to replace their comrades in Warsaw. The remainder quickly died off.

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123,000 - 124,000 1,000 Poles (Aryans) from RADOM and TARNOW.

124,000 - 126,000 2,000 from mixed Aryan convoys.

In the meantime, ceaseless convoys of Polish and a few French and Belgian Jews arrived and, without exception, were dispatched to the gas chambers. Among them was a transport of 1,000 Polish Jews from MAJDANEK which included three Slovaks, one of whom was a certain Spira from Stropkow or Vranov.

The flow of convoys abruptly ceased at the end of July, 1943 and there was a short breathing space. The crematoria were thoroughly cleaned, the installations repaired and prepared for further use. On August 3 the killing machine again went into operation. The first convoys consisted of Jews from BENZBURG and SOSNOWITZ and others followed during the whole month of August.

132,000 - 136,000 Only 4,000 men and a very small number of women were brought to the camp. Over 35,000 were gassed. Of the aforementioned 4,000 men, many died as a result of bad treatment, hunger or illness; some were even murdered. The main responsibility for these tragedies lies with the criminal TYN (a Reich German) from the concentration camp of SACHSENHAUSEN and the Polish political prisoner No. 8516, Mieczislav KATERZINSKI, from Warsaw.

The "selections" were introduced again and this time to a murderous extent, especially in the women's camp. The camp doctor, an SS "Hauptsturmführer" and the son or nephew of the police president of Berlin (we forget his name) outdid all the others in brutality. The selection system has been continued ever since, until our escape.

137,000 - 138,000 At the end of August 1,000 Poles came from the PAWIAK prison and 80 Jews from Greece.

138,000 - 141,000 3,000 men from various Aryan transports.

142,000 - 145,000 At the beginning of September, 1943, 3,000 Jews arrived from Polish working camps and Russian prisoners of war.

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148,000 - 152,000 During the week following September 7, 1943 family transports of Jews arrived from THERESIENSTADT. They enjoyed quite an exceptional status which was incomprehensible to us. The families were not separated and not a single one of them received the customary and "normal" gas treatment. Their heads were not even shaven, they were able to keep their luggage, and were lodged in a separate section of the camp, men, women and children together. The men were not forced to work and a school was even set up for the children under the direction of Fredy HIRSCH (Makabi, Prague). They were allowed to correspond freely. The worst they had to undergo was mistreatment at the hands of their "camp eldest," a certain professional criminal by the name of Arno BOHM, prisoner No. 8. Our astonishment increased when we learned of the official indication given to this special transport:

"SB" - transport of Czech Jews with six months' quarantine -

We very well knew what "SB" meant ("Sonderbehandlung"), but could not understand the long period of six months' quarantine and the generally clement treatment this group received. The longest quarantine period we had witnessed so far was only three weeks. Towards the end of the six months' period, however, we became convinced that the fate of these Jews would be the same as that of most of the others - the gas chamber. We tried to get in touch with the leader of this group and explain their lot and what they had to expect. Some of them declared (especially Fredy HIRSCH who seemed to enjoy the full confidence of his companions) that if our fears took shape they would organize resistance. Thus, some of them hoped to instigate a general revolt in the camp. On March 6, 1944 we heard that the crematoria were being prepared to receive the Czech Jews.

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I hastened to inform Fredy HIRSCH and begged him to take immediate action as they had nothing to lose. He replied that he recognized his duty. Before nightfall I again crept over to the Czech camp where I learned that Fredy HIRSCH was dying; he had poisoned himself with luminol. The next day, March 7, 1944, he was taken, unconscious, along with his 3,791 comrades who had arrived at BIRKENAU on September 7, 1943 on trucks, to the crematoria and gassed. The young people went to their death singing, but to our great disappointment nobody revolted. Some 500 elderly people had died during quarantine. Of all these Jews only 11 twins were left alive. They are being subjected to various medical tests at AUSCHWITZ, and when we left BIRKENAU they were still alive. Among the gassed was Rozsi FURST, from SERED. A week before the gassing, that is to say on March 1, 1944, everyone in the Czech group in the camp had been asked to inform his relatives about his well being. The letters had to be dated March 23 to 25, 1944 and they were requested to ask for food parcels.

153,000 - 154,000 1,000 Polish Aryans from the PAVIAK penitentiary.

155,000 - 159,000 During October and November, 1943, 4,000 persons from various prisons and smaller transports of Jews from BENZBURG and vicinity, who had been driven out of their hiding places; also a group of Russians under protective custody from the MINSK and VITEBSK regions. Some more Russian prisoners of war arrived and, as stated, they as usual received numbers between 1 and 12,000.

160,000 - 165,000 In December, 1943, 5,000 men originating from Dutch, French, Belgian transports and, for the first time, Italian Jews from FIUME, TRIESTE and ROME. Of these at least 30,000 were immediately gassed. The mortality among these Jews was very high and, in addition, the "selection" system was still decimating all ranks. The bestiality of the whole procedure reached its

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culmating point between January 10 and 24, 1944 when even young and healthy persons irrespective of profession or working classification - with the exception of doctors - were ruthlessly "selected."

Every single prisoner was called up, a strict control was established to see that all were present, and the "selection" proceeded under the supervision of the same camp doctor (son or nephew of the Police President of Berlin) and of the Commandant of BIRKENAU, SS "Untersturmführer" SCHWARZHUBER. The "infirmary" had in the meantime been transferred from "Block 7" to a separate section of the camp where conditions had become quite bearable. Its inmates, nevertheless, were gassed to the last man. Apart from this group, this general action cost some 2,500 men and over 6,000 women their lives.

165,000 - 168,000 On December 20, 1943 a further group of 3,000 Jews arrived from THERESIENSTADT. The convoy was listed under the same category as the one which had reached the camp on September 7, i.e. "SB" - transport, Czech Jews with six months' quarantine." On their arrival, men, women and children all joined the September group. They enjoyed the same privileges as their predecessors. Twenty-four hours before the gassing of the first group took place, the latest arrivals were separated from the rest and placed in another part of the camp where they still are at present. Their quarantine ends on June 20, 1944.

169,000 - 170,000 1,000 people in small groups, Jews, Poles, and Russians under protective custody.

170,000 - 171,000 1,000 Poles and Russians and a number of Yugoslavs.

171,000 - 174,000 At the end of February and beginning of March, 3,000 Jews from Holland, Belgium, and for the first time long-established French Jews (not naturalized) from VICHY, in France. The greater part of this transport was gassed immediately upon arrival.

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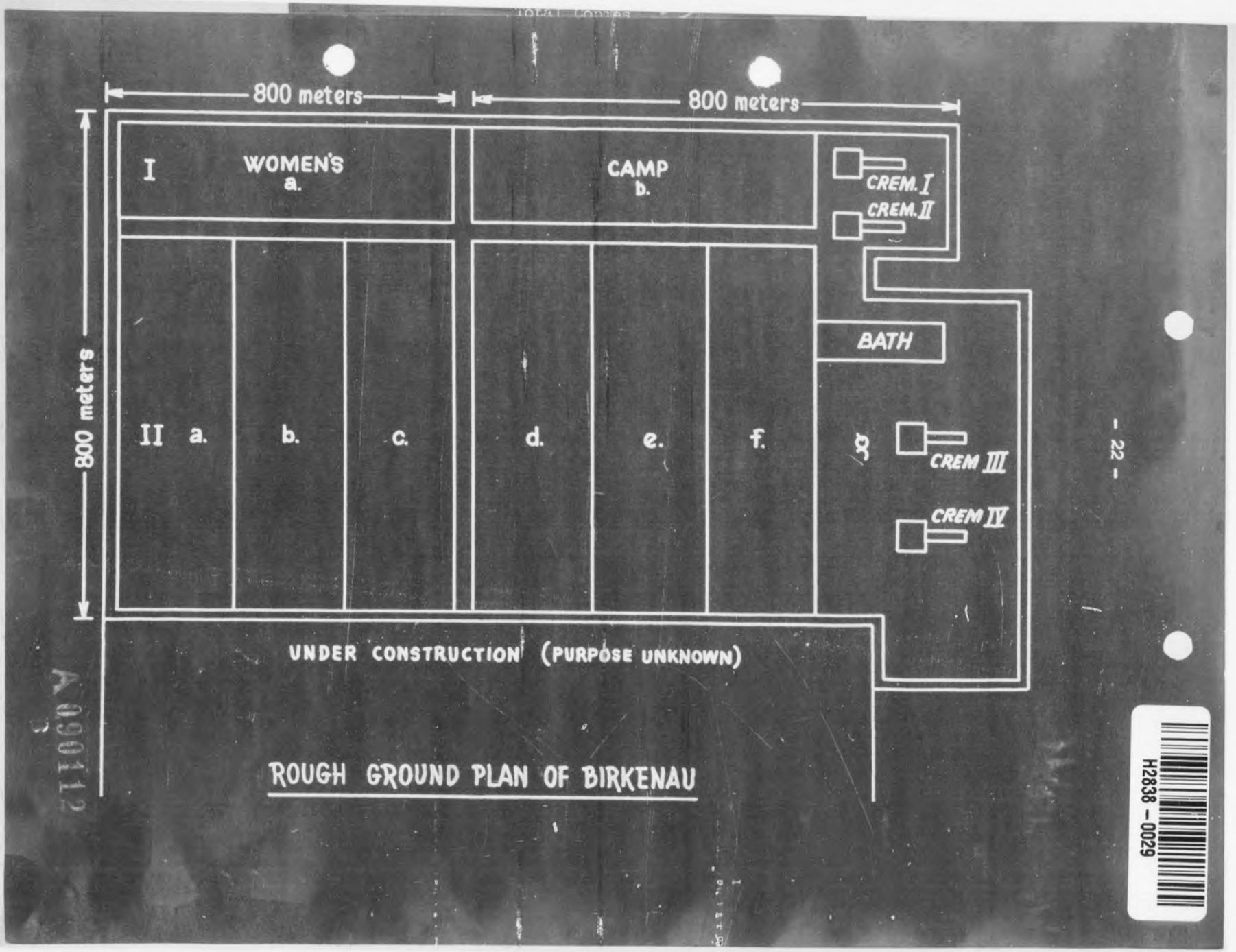

ROUGH GROUND PLAN OF BIRKENAU

A 09012

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H2838 - 0030

Small groups of BENZBURGER and SOSNOWITZER Jews, who had been dragged from hiding, arrived in the middle of March. One of them told me that many Polish Jews were crossing over to Slovakia and from there to Hungary and that the Slovak Jews helped them on their way through.

After the gassing of the THERESIENSTADT transport there were no further arrivals until March 15, 1944. The effective strength of the camp rapidly diminished and men of later incoming transports, especially Dutch Jews, were directed to the camp. When we left on April 7, 1944 we heard that large convoys of Greek Jews were expected.

The camp of BIRKENAU consists of three building areas. At present only sections I and II are guarded by the inner chain of sentry posts, whereas section III is still under construction and uninhabited. At the time of our departure from the camp (the beginning of April, 1944), the following categories of prisoners were in BIRKENAU:

Section I (Women's concentration camp)

	Slov. Jews	Other Jews	Aryans	Remarks
Ia and Ib	app. 300	app. 7,000	app. 6,000	In addition to the 300 Slovak Jewish girls, app. 100 are employed in the administration building of AUSCHWITZ.

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Section II (Women's Concentration Camp)

		Slov. Jews	Other Jews	Aryans	Remarks
IIa	Quarantine camp	2	app. 200	app. 800	One of the two Slovak Jews is Dr. Andreas MULLER from Podolinec (block eldest).
IIb	Jews from THERESIENSTADT	-	" 3,500	-	With a six months' quarantine.
IIc	At present uninhabited	-	-	-	
IId	"Stammlager"	58	" 4,000	" 6,000	
IIe	Gypsy camp	-	-	" 4,500	This is the remainder of some 16,000 gypsies. They are not used for work and die off rapidly.
IIf	Infirmary	6	" 1,000	" 500	The six Slovak Jews are all employees of the building, namely:

No. 36,832 Walter SPITZER, block eldest from NEMSOVA, came to LUBLIN from BIRKENAU.
" 29,867 Jozef NEUMANN, ("overseer" of the "corpse crew") from SNINA.
" 44,989 Josef ZELMANOVIC, "staff" from SNINA.
- Cham KATZ, "staff" from SNINA.
" 30,049 Ludwig SOLMANN, "clerk" from KESMAREK.
" 32,407 Ludwig EISENSTADTER, tattooist from KREMPACHY.

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The internal administration of the camp of BIRKENAU is run by specially selected prisoners. The "blocks" are not inhabited according to nationalities but rather according to working categories. Each block is supervised by a staff of five, i.e., a block eldest, a block recorder, a male nurse, and two attendants.

The block eldest

He wears an arm band with the number of his block, and is responsible for order there. He has power over life and death. Until February, 1944 nearly 50 percent of the block eldests were Jews but this was stopped by order of BERLIN. They all had to resign with the exception of three Jews who, in spite of this order, were able to keep their posts.

The block recorder

He is the block eldest's right hand, does all the clerical work, keeping the index cards and records. His work is of great responsibility and he has to keep his ledgers with painful exactitude as the index cards only indicate the number and not the name of the prisoners; errors are fatal. For instance, if the recorder has noted down a death by mistake - and this often occurs with the unusually high mortality - the discrepancy is simply straightened out by killing the bearer of the corresponding number. Corrections are not admitted. The block recorder occupies a key post which is often misused.

Nursing and "room" duties

They consist in keeping the inside of the barracks clean and carrying out small manual jobs in and around the block. Of course there is no question of really taking care of the sick.

The camp eldest supervises the whole camp; he is also a prisoner. This post is at present held by:

Franz DANISCH, No. 11,182, a political prisoner, from KONIGSHÜTTE, Upper Silesia. He is undisputed master of the whole camp and has power to nominate or dismiss block eldests and block-recorders, hand out jobs, etc.

Further we have a "chief recorder" whose position is undoubtedly one of the most powerful in the camp. He is in direct contact with camp headquarters, receiving their orders and reporting on all matters. All camp recorders are directly subordinated to him and have to submit all their reports to him. The chief recorder of BIRKENAU is:

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Kasimir GORK, No. 31,029, a Pole from WARSAW, a former bank clerk.

The supreme control over the blocks lies in the hands of six to eight "block leaders," all SS men. Every night they hold roll call, the result of which is communicated to:

The Camp Leader, "Untersturmführer" SCHWARZHUBER, from the Tyrol. This individual is an alcoholic and a sadist. Over him is the camp commander who also controls AUSCHWITZ where there is a second subordinate camp leader. The camp commander's name is: HOESS.

The Chief of a work squad or group is called the "Capo."

During work the "Capo" has full authority over his group of prisoners and not infrequently one of these "Capos" kills a man working under him. In larger squads there may be several "Capos" who are then under the orders of a "Capo-in-chief." At first there were many Jewish "Capos," but an order from BERLIN prohibited their being employed.

Supreme control over work is carried out by German specialists.

II. MAJDANEK

On June 14, 1942 we left NOVAKY, passed through ZILINA and arrived at ZWARDON toward 5 o'clock in the evening. We were assembled, counted, and SS men took over our convoy. One of these guards voiced his surprise at the fact we had made the journey without water by shouting: "Those Slovak barbarians, give them no water!" The journey continued and we reached LUBLIN two days later. Here the following order was issued: "Those fit for work aged between 15 and 50 are to leave the cars. Children and old people remain." We struggled out of the freight car and discovered that the station was surrounded by Lithuanians in SS uniforms, all armed with automatic pistols. The cars containing the children and old people were immediately closed and the train moved on. We do not know where they went and what happened to them.

The SS troop leader in command informed us that we had a long way ahead of us, but that whoever wanted to take his luggage with him could do so. Those who preferred to put it on a truck would certainly receive it later. So some of us dragged along our luggage, whereas others loaded it on the truck.

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Behind the town stood a clothing factory called the "Bekleidungswerke." In the courtyard waiting for their noon meal some 1,000 prisoners in dirty striped clothing, obviously Jews, were lined up and the sight of them was none too encouraging. Arriving on a small hill we suddenly sighted the vast barrack camp of MAJDANEK surrounded by a 3-meter-high barbed-wire fence. No sooner had we gone through the entrance gate than I met a prisoner who warned me that all our personal belongings would be taken away. Around us stood Slovak Jews in a wretched condition, their heads shaven, in dirty prison clothes and wooden clogs or simply bare-footed, many of them having swollen feet. They begged us for food and we gave them what we could spare, knowing very well that everything would be confiscated anyway. We were then conducted to the stock room where we had to leave everything we possessed. At double time we were herded into another barrack where we had to undress, were shaved, and given a shower. After this we were issued convict outfits, wooden clogs and caps.

I was assigned to "working section No. 2" as the whole camp was divided into three such sections separated by wire fences. Section No. 2 was occupied by a number of Slovak and Czech Jews. For two full days we were taught how to remove and put on our caps when we met a German. Then in the pouring rain we practiced roll calling for hours.

The barrack accommodations were quite original to say the least. Three long tables (nearly as long as the barrack itself) had been placed one on top of the other. These comprised our "bunks" (4 floors of them, that is ground floor plus the three tables). A small passage was kept open along the walls.

Our food consisted of a fairly thick "soup" early in the morning which had to be eaten with the hands. We got the same soup again at lunch. The evening meal consisted of a brew called "tea," 300 grams of bad bread and some 20 to 30 grams of marmelade or artificial fat of the worst quality.

Great importance was attributed during the first few days to the learning of the "camp song." For hours we stood singing:

From the whole of Europe came
We Jews to Lublin
Much work has to be done
And this is the beginning.

To manage this duty
Forget all about the past
For in fulfillment of duty
There is community.

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H2838 - 0035

Therefore on to work with vigour
Let everyone play his part
Together we want to work
At the same pace and rhythm.

Not all will understand
Why we stand here in rows
Those must we soon force
To understand its meaning.

Modern times must teach us
Teach us all along
That it is to work
And only to work we belong.

Therefore on to work with vigour
Let everyone play his part
Together we want to work
At the same pace and rhythm.

(This is a literal translation of the song).

Working section No. I was occupied by Slovak Jews
" " " II " " " Slovak and Czech Jews
" " " III " " " Partisans
" " IV & V was being built by the Jews of Sectors I & II

The Partisans in section III were locked up in their barracks without having to work and their food was thrown at them as if they had been dogs. They died in great numbers in their overcrowded barracks and were shot at the slightest excuse by the guards who did not dare venture too near them.

The "Capos" were Reich Germans and Czechs; whereas the Germans were brutal, the Czechs helped wherever they could. The camp eldest was a gypsy from HOLIC by the name of GALBAVY. His adjutant, a Jew from SERED called MITTLER, certainly owed his post to his brutal actions. He took full advantage of the power conferred upon him to torment the Jews who, as it was, already had their full share of hardships. The evening roll call brought us more brutal treatment from the SS men and for hours we had to stand in the open after a hard day's work and sing the "camp song." A Jewish orchestra leader was forced to conduct from the roof of one of the barracks. This was the occasion of much hilarity among the SS men.

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During these "concert parties" the SS guards were very generous with blows and physical punishment. A tragic end befell Rabbi ECKSTEIN from SERED who was suffering from dysentery and once came a few minutes too late for the roll call. The group leader had him seized and dipped head first into one of the latrines, then poured cold water over him, drew his revolver and shot him.

The crematorium was located between working sections I and II and all the bodies were burned there. With an effective strength of 6,000 to 8,000 men per working section, the mortality was about 30 a day. This figure later increased five and sixfold. In other instances 10 to 20 inmates were removed from the sick room, brought to the crematorium and burned, after having been put to death in a manner which I have not been able to find out. This crematorium was electrically heated and the attendants were Russians.

Illnesses increased as a result of the bad food and intolerable living conditions. Serious stomach troubles and a seemingly incurable foot disease spread throughout the camp. The feet of the victims swelled up to the point where they could not walk. More and more of the sick were now being taken to the crematorium and when on June 26, 1942 the number thus treated rose to 70, I decided to take an opportunity which was offered to me and applied for a transfer to AUSCHWITZ.

On June 27, 1942 I discarded my prisoner's outfit and travelled to AUSCHWITZ in civilian clothes.

After a journey of 48 hours during which we were couped up in freight cars without food or water, we arrived at AUSCHWITZ half dead. At the entrance gate the huge poster, "Work brings freedom," greeted us. As the courtyard was clean and well kept, and the brick buildings made a good impression after the dirty and primitive barracks of LUBLIN, we thought that the change was for the best. We were taken to a cellar and received tea and bread. Next day, however, our civilian clothes were taken away, our heads were shaved, and our numbers were tattooed on our forearms in the usual way. Finally, we were issued a set of prisoner's clothes similar to those we had worn in LUBLIN and were enrolled as "political prisoners" in the concentration camp of AUSCHWITZ.

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H2838 - 0037

We were billeted in "Block 17" and slept on the floor. In an adjoining row of buildings separated from ours by a high wall, the Jewish girls from Slovakia, who had been brought there in March and April of 1942, were quartered. We worked in the huge "BUNA" plant to which we were herded every morning about 3 a.m. At midday our food consisted of potato or turnip soup and in the evening we received some bread. During work we were terribly mistreated. As our working place was situated outside the large chain of sentry posts, it was divided into small sectors of 10 x 10 meters, each guarded by an SS man. Whoever stepped outside these squares during working hours was immediately shot without warning for having "attempted to escape." Often it happened that out of pure spite an SS man would order a prisoner to fetch some given object outside his square. If he followed the order, he was shot for having left his assigned place. The work was extremely hard and there were no rest periods. The way to and from work had to be covered at a brisk military trot; anyone falling out of line was shot. On my arrival about 3,000 people, of whom 2,000 were Slovak Jews, were working on this emplacement. Very few could bear the strain and although escape seemed hopeless, attempts were made every day. The result was several hangings a week.

After a number of weeks of painful work at the "BUNA" plant a terrible typhus epidemic broke out. The weaker prisoners died in hundreds. An immediate quarantine was ordered and work at the "BUNA" stopped. Those still alive were sent, at the end of July, 1942, to the gravel pit but there work was even still more strenuous. We were in such a state of weakness that, even in trying to do our best, we could not satisfy the overseers. Most of us got swollen feet. Due to our inability to perform the heavy work demanded of us our squad was accused of being lazy and disorderly. Soon after a medical commission inspected all of us; they carried out their job very thoroughly. Anyone with swollen feet or particularly weak was separated from the rest. Although I was in great pain, I controlled myself and stood erect in front of the commission who passed me as physically fit. Out of 300 persons examined, 200 were found to be unfit and immediately sent to BIRKENAU and gassed. I was then detailed for work at the DAW (Deutsche Aufrüstungswerke) where we had to paint skis. The prescribed minimum to be painted each day was 120. Anyone unable to paint this many was thoroughly flogged in the evening. It meant working very hard to avoid this punishment. Another group was employed at making cases for hand grenades. At one time 15,000 had been completed but it was found that they were a few centimeters too small. As punishment several Jews were shot for sabotage.

Somewhere around the middle of August, 1942 all the Jewish girls from Slovakia who lived next to our quarters, on the other side of the wall, were transferred to BIRKENAU. I had the opportunity to talk to them and was able to see how weak and half-starved

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H2838 - 0038

all of them were. They were dressed in old Russian uniform rags and wore wooden clogs. Their heads were shaven clean. The same day we again had to undergo a strict examination and those suspected of having typhus were removed to the Birch Wood. The remainder were shaved afresh, bathed, issued a new set of clothes and finally billeted in the barracks the girls had just left. By chance I learned that there was an opening in the "clearance squad" and I handed in my application. I was detailed to this task.

This squad consisted of about a hundred Jewish prisoners. We were sent to a far corner of the camp, away from all our comrades. Here we found huge sheds full of knapsacks, suitcases, and other luggage. We had to open each piece of baggage and sort the contents into large cases specially prepared for each category of goods, i.e. combs, mirrors, sugar, canned food, chocolate, medicines, etc. The cases were then stored away. Underwear, shirts and clothes of all kinds went to a special barrack, where they were sorted out and packed by Jewish girls. Old and worn clothes were addressed to the "TEXTILE FACTORY" at MEMEL, whereas the usuable garments were dispatched to a collecting center in BERLIN. Gold, money, bank notes, and precious stones had to be handed over to the political section. Many of these objects were, however, stolen by the SS guards or by prisoners. A brutal and vile individual who often struck the women is commander of this squad. He is SS "Scharführer" WYKLEFF.

Every day the girls who came to their work from BIRKENAU described to us the terrible conditions prevailing there. They were beaten and brutalized and their mortality was much higher than among the men. Twice a week "selections" took place, and every day new girls replaced those who had disappeared.

During a night shift I was able to witness for the first time how incoming convoys were handled. The transport I saw contained Polish Jews. They had received no water for days and when the doors of the freight cars were open we were ordered to chase them out with loud shouts. They were utterly exhausted and about a hundred of them had died during the journey. The living were lined up in rows of five. Our job was to remove the dead, dying, and the luggage from the cars. The dead, and this included anyone unable to stand on his feet, were piled in a heap. Luggage and parcels were collected and stacked up. Then the railroad cars had to be thoroughly cleaned so that no trace of their frightful load was left behind. A commission from the political department proceeded with the "selection" of approximately 10 percent of the men and 5 percent of the women and had them transferred to the camps. The remainder were loaded on trucks, sent to BIRKENAU,

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and gassed while the dead and dying were taken directly to the furnaces. It often happened that small children were thrown alive into the trucks along with the dead. Parcels and luggage were taken to the warehouses and sorted out in the previously described manner.

Between July and September, 1942 a typhus epidemic had raged in AUSCHWITZ, especially in the women's camp of BIRKENAU. None of the sick received medical attention and in the first stages of the epidemic a great many were killed by phenol injections, and later on others were gassed wholesale. Some 15,000 to 20,000, mostly Jews, died during these two months. The girls' camp suffered the most, as it was not fitted with sanitary installations, and the poor wretches were covered with lice. Every week large "selections" took place and the girls had to present themselves naked to the "selection committee," regardless of weather conditions. They waited in deadly fear whether they would be chosen or given another week's grace. Suicides were frequent and were mostly committed by throwing one's self against the high tension wires of the inner fence. This went on until they had dwindled to 5 percent of their original number. Now there are only 400 of these girls left and most of them have been able to secure some sort of clerical post in the women's camp. About 100 girls hold jobs at the staff building in AUSCHWITZ where they do all the clerical work connected with the administration of the two camps. Thanks to their knowledge of languages they are also used as interpreters. Others are employed in the main kitchen and laundry. Of late these girls have been able to dress themselves quite well as they have had opportunities to complete their wardrobes which, in some cases, even include silk stockings. Generally speaking they are reasonably well off and are even allowed to let their hair grow. Of course this cannot be said of the other Jewish inmates of the women's camp. It just so happens that these Slovak Jewish girls have been in the camp the longest of all. But if today they enjoy certain privileges, they have previously undergone frightful sufferings.

I was not to hold this comparatively good job with the "clearance squad" for long. Shortly afterwards I was transferred to BIRKENAU on disciplinary grounds and remained there over a year and a half. On April 7, 1944 I managed to escape with my companion.

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Careful estimate of the number of Jews gassed in BIRKENAU between April, 1942 and April, 1944 (according to countries of origin).

Poland (transported by truck)	approximately	300,000
" " " train	"	600,000
Holland	"	100,000
Greece	"	45,000
France	"	150,000
Belgium	"	50,000
Germany	"	60,000
Yugoslavia, Italy and Norway	"	50,000
Lithuania	"	50,000
Bohemia, Moravia and Austria	"	30,000
Slovakia	"	30,000
Various camps for foreign Jews in Poland ..	"	300,000
	approximately	1,765,000

III.

On August 6, 1944 a report was received in Switzerland covering the happenings in BIRKENAU during the period between April 7 and May 27. This second report was drawn up by two other young Jews who succeeded in escaping from this camp and reaching Slovakia.

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Their declarations complete the first report, particularly in regard to the arrival of the Hungarian Jews in BIRKENAU. They also add certain new details not contained in the previous accounts. It has not been possible, however, to check the origin of this "second report" as closely as it was the first.

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After the flight of the two Slovak Jews from BIRKENAU on April 7, 1944 great excitement reigned in the camp. The "Political Division" of the Gestapo instituted a thoroughgoing investigation, and the friends and superiors of the two escapees were closely questioned, although in vain. Since the two had held posts as "block recorders," all Jews exercising such functions, by way of punishment and also as a precautionary measure, were removed and, as the Gestapo suspected that they had succeeded in escaping through Building No. 3, the outer chain of sentry posts was considerably shortened so that now it cuts through the middle of Building No. 3.

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At the beginning of the month of April, a transport of Greek Jews arrived, of whom about 200 were admitted to the camp. The remainder of circa 1,500 were immediately gassed.

Between the 10th and 15th of April some 5,000 "Aryans" arrived in BIRKENAU, mainly Poles, some 2,000 to 3,000 women among them being from the abandoned camp of LUBLIN-MAJDANEK. They were given numbers running from approximately:

176,000 to 181,000 Among the women were about 300 Jewish girls from Poland. The greater part of the new arrivals were ill, weak, and very run down. According to their information the healthy ones had been sent from LUBLIN to German concentration camps. Concerning the fate of the Jews held in the camp of LUBLIN-MAJDANEK, we learned from them, especially from the Jewish girls, that on November 3, 1943 all Jews in this camp, that is some 11,000 men and 6,000 women, were killed.

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We recalled that about this time the SS in BIRKENAU had reported that LUBLIN had been attacked by partisans and, in order to fight against the latter, a number of the SS personnel from BIRKENAU had been temporarily transferred to LUBLIN. It was now clear to us for what purpose our SS had gone to LUBLIN.

Apparently the Jews had been compelled to dig a long, deep grave in Field V of the camp of MAJDANEK and on November 3 they were brought out in groups of 200 to 300, shot and thrown into the grave. Within 24 hours everything was over. During the execution loud music was played to drown out the shots.

Three hundred girls who were active in LUBLIN on the "clearing-up Commando" and as recorders were left alive. Three days after their arrival in BIRKENAU they were all gassed and burned on special order of BERLIN. Through an error on the part of the "recorder" two of the girls were not sent to the gas chamber. This was discovered, however, the next day, and the girls were immediately shot and the recorder replaced.

The fate of the LUBLIN Jews caused great depression among the Jews in the camp of BIRKENAU who became afraid that one day the whole of BIRKENAU would suddenly be "liquidated" in the same way.

Approximately No. 182,000

Toward the end of April more Greek Jews were brought to BIRKENAU. Some 200 were admitted to the camp and about 3,000 exterminated.

183,000 to 185,000

At the beginning of May, 1944 smaller transports of Dutch, French, Belgian, and Greek Jews arrived, as well as Polish "Aryans." Most of them were put to work in the BUNA plant.

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On May 10, 1944 the first transport of Hungarian Jews arrived in BIRKENAU. They were principally from the prisons of Budapest, including those who had been arrested in the streets and railroad stations of the city. Among the women were:

Ruth Lorant
Mici Lorant
Ruth Quasztler
Irene Roth
Barna Fuchs

The transport was received in AUSCHWITZ and BIRKENAU according to the well-known procedure (heads shaved, numbers tattooed, etc.) The men were given numbers beginning with 186,000 and the women were placed in the women's camp. About 600 men, of whom some 150 were between the ages of 45 and 60, were brought to BIRKENAU where they were divided up among various work detachments. The remainder stayed in AUSCHWITZ where they worked in the BUNA plant.

The members of the transport were all left alive and none of them, as had been customary, were sent directly to the crematoria. In the postcards which they were allowed to write, they had to give "Waldsee" as return address.

On May 15 mass transports from Hungary began to arrive in BIRKENAU. Some 14,000 to 15,000 Jews arrived daily. The spur railroad track which ran into the camp to the crematoria was completed in great haste, the crews working night and day, so that the transports could be brought directly to the crematoria. Only about 10 percent of these transports were admitted to the camp; the balance were immediately gassed and burned. Never had so many Jews been gassed since the establishment of BIRKENAU. The "Special Commando" had to be increased to 600 men and, after two or three days, to 800 (people being recruited from among the Hungarian Jews who had arrived first). The size of the "Clearing Commando" was stepped up from 150 to 700 men. Three crematoria worked day and night (the 4th was being repaired at that time) and, since the capacity of the crematoria was not enough, great pits 30 meters long and 15 meters wide were once more dug in the "Birkenwald" (as in the time before the crematoria) where corpses were burned day and night. Thus the "exterminating capacity" became almost unlimited.

The Hungarian Jews who were left alive (about 10 percent) were not included in the normal camp "enrollment." Although they were shaved and shorn and received convict's clothing, they were not tattooed. They were housed in a separate section of the camp, section "C", and were later transferred to various concentration camps in the German Reich: Buchenwald, Mauthausen, Grossrosen,

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Gusen, Flossenburg, Sachsenhausen, etc. The women were temporarily quartered in the "gypsy camp" in separate blocks and then also transferred elsewhere. Jewish girls from Slovakia were "block eldests" there.

The first Hungarian transports came from: Munkacs, Nagyszöllös, Nyiregyhaza, Ungvar, Huszt, Kassau, Beregszasz, Marmarossziget, Nagyberezna. Among those remaining alive were:

Robert and Ervin Waizen
Stark
Ehrenreich
Katz, Chaim

The last two have already been transferred. The parents of the Waizen brothers were gassed.

The transports of Hungarian Jews were under the particular control of the former Camp Commander "Hauptsturmbannführer" HÖSS, who travelled continually between AUSCHWITZ and Budapest. The Commandant of Birkenau at this time was HÖSS' former adjutant, "Hauptsturmführer" KRAMER.

187,000 to 189,000 1,600 French "Aryans," almost exclusively intellectuals and prominent persons, including a small number of Polish "emigrés." Among the French were high officers, members of leading French financial circles, well-known journalists and politicians, and even, it was said, former ministers. On their arrival some of them rebelled but were put down in an exceedingly brutal fashion by the SS, some of them being shot on the spot. The French were very courageous and self-possessed. They were strictly isolated in BIRKENAU and no one was allowed to have any contact with them. After two weeks, on orders from Berlin, they were sent to Mauthausen (near Linz, in Austria.).

Since the middle of May the newly arrived Jews no longer received consecutive numbers, as formerly. A new numbering system was inaugurated beginning with No. 1 preceded by the tattooed letter "A." We do not know the reason for this measure. At the time of our flight on May 27, 1944 about 4,000 Jews had received these new numbers. The 4,000 were composed of 1,000 Dutch, French, and Italian Jews and 3,000 Jews from THERESIENSTADT who reached BIRKENAU on May 23, 1944. These were treated exactly as the previous two transports from THERESIENSTADT. They were quartered

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(unshorn) with the members of the previous convoy from THERESIENSTADT (who have been in BIRKENAU since December 20, 1943 and whose "quarantine" is due to be up on June 20, 1944) in Section IIB.

According to the statement of a Jew from the "Special Commando," "Reichsführer" Himmler was said to have visited BIRKENAU on the 15th or 16th of May. On one of these days I myself saw three automobiles and five men in civilian clothing drive toward the crematoria. The Jew who made this statement declared that he, as well as others, recognized Himmler, who had visited crematorium No. 1 and after a stay of about half an hour had again driven off with those accompanying him. On the day after there was an account in the Silesian newspapers of Himmler's visit to Cracow, so that this report could be true.

One other happening should not be forgotten which was told to us by the men of the "Special Commando." In the late summer of 1943 a commission of four Dutch Jews - distinguished looking men - came to AUSCHWITZ. Their visit had already apparently been announced to the Camp Commander, for the Dutch Jews in AUSCHWITZ received better clothes, as well as regular eating equipment (plates, spoons, etc.) and better food. The commission of four were very politely received and were shown over the camp buildings and particularly those portions which were clean and made a good impression. Dutch Jews from the camp were brought to them who reported that only a portion of the Dutch Jews were in this camp, the others being in other similar camps. In this manner the four men were satisfied and signed a statement according to which the commission had found everything in good order in AUSCHWITZ. After the signing the four Dutch Jews expressed a desire to see the camp of BIRKENAU and particularly the crematoria about which they had heard some stories. The camp authorities declared themselves quite willing to show them both BIRKENAU and the crematoria, the latter being used, they said, to cremate those who died in the camp. The commission was then taken to BIRKENAU, accompanied by the camp leader, Aumayer, and immediately to crematorium No. 1. Here they were shot from behind. A telegram was supposedly sent to Holland reporting that after leaving AUSCHWITZ the four men had been victims of an unfortunate automobile accident.

There is a biological laboratory in AUSCHWITZ where SS, civilian, and internee doctors are occupied. The women and girls on whom experiments are performed are housed in Block 10. For a long time the "block eldest" there was Magda Hellinger from Michalovce and a girl named Rozsi (family name unknown) from Hummené. Experiments were carried out only on Jewish girls and women, although to date no Slovakian girls have been used.

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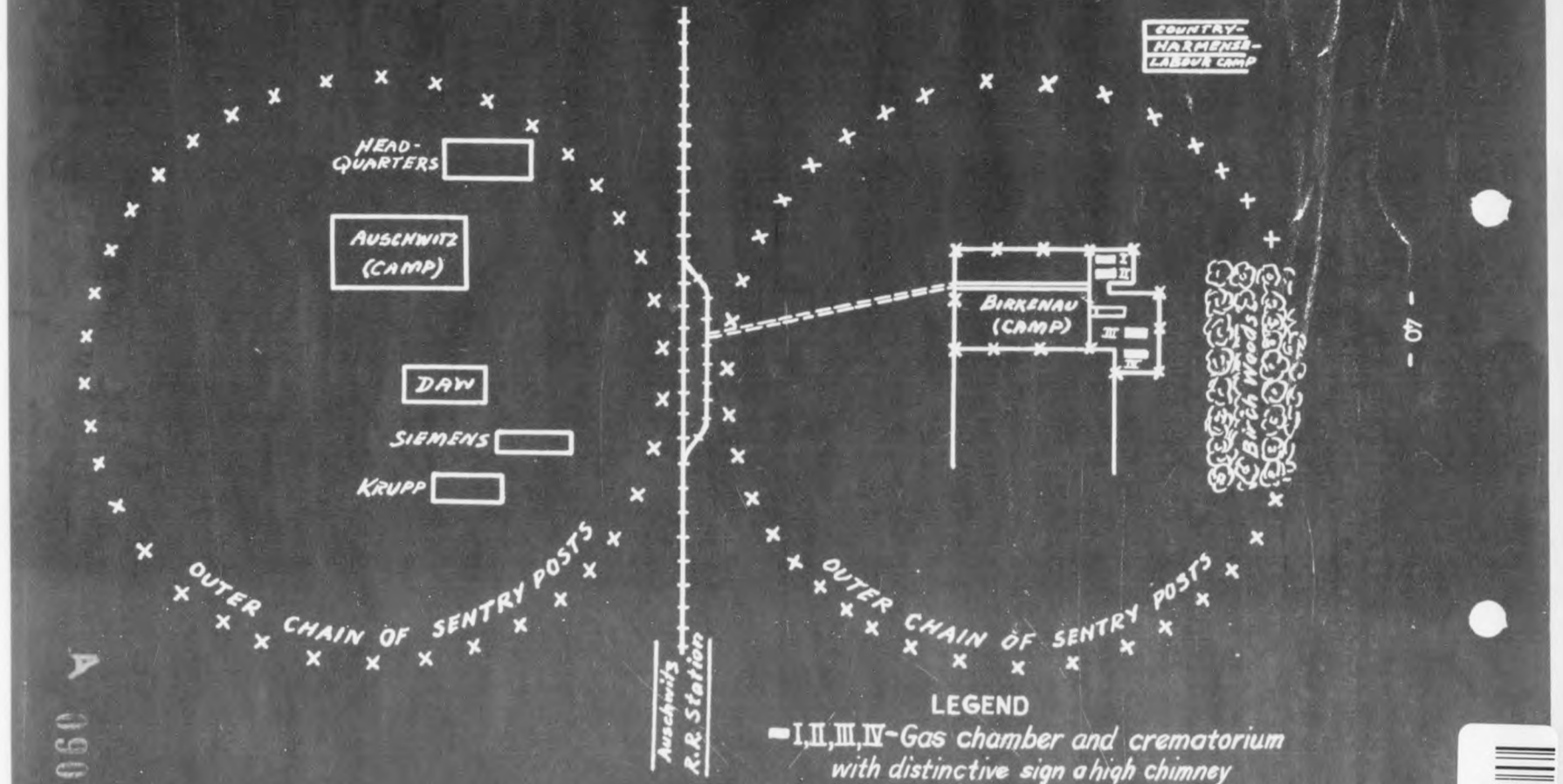
Experiments were also performed on men but the latter were not housed separately. A great many died as a result of these experiments. Often gypsies were used. Block 10, where the "subjects" of the experiments are housed, is completely isolated, and even the window openings are walled up. No one whatsoever had admission to it.

The Commandants of AUSCHWITZ and BIRKENAU have been to date the following: AUMAYER, SCHWARZHUBER, WEISS, HARTENSTEIN, HÖSS, and KRAMER.

A 090129

APPROXIMATE SITUATION SKETCH OF AUSCHWITZ AND BIRKENAU

CAMP DISTRICTS



LEGEND

■ I, II, III, IV - Gas chamber and crematorium with distinctive sign a high chimney

- 40 -

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No. 2

TRANSPORT

(The Polish Major's Report)

A 090131

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I. TRANSPORT

On March 24, 1942 we were gathered together in special "assembling cell" No. 2 of the Montelupich prison in Cracow. We knew that our group consisting of 60 men was to be sent to the concentration camp of OSWIĘCIM (AUSCHWITZ). At 8 o'clock the next morning, two SS guards appeared with lists and started counting those present. We had to undress and wait. Finally the doors were opened and we caught sight of two columns of SS guards and policemen with fixed bayonets. In the courtyard two trucks were parked in each of which 30 men had to take their places. These trucks were quite small and the space on the inside was divided in two by a chain running across the middle. The first to enter had to stand with bent heads, whereas the others crouched down between the legs of the standing men. In this way it was possible to fill up the very small space with 30 men. We were loaded in with blows from rifle-butts, shouts and kicks. In the second separated section of the truck, two SS men stood guard with machine guns. We departed. Behind us, at a certain distance, followed motor-cyclists with machine guns. Our trucks were hermetically closed so that there was no possibility of seeing where we were going. Our journey lasted 1 1/2 hours with several short stops. Our limbs grew stiff as there was no possibility of changing one's position, and one of our men who was up against the chain became unconscious. He was brought back to his senses by blows from the guards. At last we arrived, staggered to the ground, and found ourselves standing in front of a gate over which we could read: "Work brings freedom." Inside, an orchestra was playing. This was AUSCHWITZ, and it appeared that we were expected.

We were lined up in columns of five (a system applied on every conceivable occasion in the camp) and the names of the "newcomers" were once more read out. The man called up had immediately to run over to the one reading the roll and place himself in a line with those already summoned, after having received his number from the hands of an assistant. From this moment on, names were replaced by numbers. This system of "reception" was maintained until the summer of 1943. Later, all the prisoners (with the exception of Germans) had their numbers tattooed on their upper forearms, which had been the practice in the case of the Jews from the beginning. This whole numbering system was apparently applied to lessen the possibility of escape and to make it easier to identify the bodies. These numbers were handed to us by the "block leader" named STUBA, after which we went bareheaded and accompanied by the orchestra into the camp itself. The clock stood at 11 a.m. After a short visit to the "stock" room, we were shut

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up in a barrack until 5 p.m. There we were visited by a number of old inmates who earnestly begged us to give them our watches, rings, lighters, and cigarettes to avoid their being confiscated. Any food brought with us should be eaten at once, as it would be taken away as well. In return, the prisoners promised us bread, soup, etc., once we were officially incorporated into their ranks. At last the Capo (a sort of camp overseer) arrived and delivered a short talk in which he stressed that a prisoner could not exist in this camp for more than two months without the help of his comrades; and this was to be confirmed later on by numerous examples. Out of the 60 originally in my group I was to be the only survivor.

At 5 p.m. we were herded out into the corridor. There we had to undress and pack our clothes into bundles provided with our respective numbers. We stood there naked. All we were allowed to keep were a belt and two handkerchiefs. I wanted to keep a small holy picture, but one of the prisoners who acted as assistant in these operations dissuaded me, saying: "It isn't worth while; you will merely be laughed at and it will finally be taken anyway." First, our hair was cut short and then our heads shaved, after which we were given a bath. The water was very warm. All these preparations prior to being admitted as an inmate to the camp took place in "Block 27." Next, although it was snowing, we had to run to "Block 26" where the clothing room was located. There we were issued our prisoner's outfits which consisted of a shirt, underpants, shoes, socks, a warm jacket, trousers, vest, cap, and blanket. Everything was filthy, patched, and practically worn out. My jacket, for instance, could be buttoned up in front, but the back and sleeves merely consisted of black strips of cloth patched together. Finally this operation came to an end and we were again lined up in rows of five and taken to one of the "blocks." There we were awaited by the "block leader" (most of them were Poles from Upper Silesia) who initiated us into the mysteries of barrack duties. We were instructed in sweeping and cleaning the dormitories, in taking off our caps when commanded, and how to keep in line and step. Orders were given in German and when badly carried out the block leader grew furious and struck people right and left. The evening roll call finally put an end to these exercises. The block leader then assembled his people in front of their respective blocks and, in turn, all the block leaders presented their figures to the chief recorder or clerk. If the number of prisoners tallied with the records, the roll call was over; actually the whole tiring ceremony was nothing else but one of the numerous ways in which the prisoners were mistreated. During 1940, 1941, and 1942 the roll call was usually expected to last at least an hour in all weather conditions - frost, rain, or snow - the prisoners having to wait patiently with bare heads. If an escape was reported,

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which resulted in a "manco" at evening roll call, all those assembled had to wait outside until the result of the search was known. The search parties usually returned three or four hours later and with disastrous consequences for all the prisoners' health. In 1940, for example, one escape cost the lives of a hundred inmates. It was during severe winter weather and the prisoners were forced to stand out of doors from 3:30 in the afternoon until 11 o'clock the next morning, as a result of which a hundred totally or half-frozen men were counted.

After the roll call we returned to our blocks where we were alloted "rooms;" we slept three to a bed. Old-timers told us that the best thing to do was to use our clothing as a pillow; otherwise something was bound to be stolen. So we lay down without having had the slightest bit of food the whole day. The "reception" had been so strenuous and exhausting that all of us immediately fell asleep.

At 4 a.m. we were awakened by a gong and frightful confusion ensued. About 100 people were compressed into the small hall space and in a wild stampede each one first tried to tidy up his bed (the block leader would not tolerate the smallest wrinkle in the bedding) and dress himself. There was no question of washing. Ten minutes after the gong had sounded the "room eldest" arrived and kicked everyone out into the corridor as the "rooms" had to be cleaned. The corridor was thronged with people who flocked together from all over the block. Most of them had managed to get dressed. There was really scarcely room to move in this crowd and we were pushed against walls and squashed into corners and often kicked or hit for no apparent reason. After having been in the camp for over 24 hours, we finally received some cold, unsweetened coffee, after which there was a further wait of one and one-half hours until roll call; then all the prisoners were taken to work. The newcomers were at first told to fill in questionnaires in which they had to indicate an address where they desired their letters to be sent. It was strictly forbidden not to give an address or not to write, as "they" obviously needed an address to which the death of a prisoner could be reported when the need arose.

Each of us was issued a piece of cloth with a triangle and his number painted on it, which we were instructed to sew on our tunics. Prisoners were numbered from No. 1 onwards, and in November, 1943 the last consecutive serial number had reached 170,000. The triangles in question were of different colors, each representing a category of criminal or prisoner. The "Aryan" triangle was red, the red corresponding to a political prisoner, green to professional criminals, black to "work-shirkers," pink to homosexuals (according to paragraph 175) and

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violet to members of the "Bibelforscher" religious sect. In addition, a large letter indicated the nationality of the prisoner, such as "P" for the Poles, etc. For Jews the insignia was composed of a yellow triangle on which was sewn a second triangle whose color corresponded to the "crime," the whole forming a Jewish star. From this marking system one could therefore rapidly pick out, for instance, a Polish Jewish political prisoner or a Jewish "work-slacker," etc.

When we had finished sewing on our triangles and numbers, we were herded over to the "infirmary" where we were to be "examined" by a German doctor regarding our physical aptness for work. Again we had to undress and stand in a chilly corridor for almost three hours, shivering, as the weather was still very cold even at the end of March. We met old acquaintances who were working in the infirmary and their first concern was to have news of their relatives. Upon the doctor's arrival we had to present ourselves in groups, standing stiffly at attention. All that was required of us was to stretch out an arm, move the fingers, turn around and march off. The examination consisted of nothing more and all of us were, of course, considered fit for work. Hadn't we come here for this very purpose and besides, didn't "Work bring freedom?" We knew only too well what it meant to be considered unfit for work: being taken away and condemned to "liquidation" by gas. At last we received our first warm nourishment in 36 hours. The camp food consisted of coffee or cold tea (made from acorn leaves, etc.) in the morning and soup, thick or thin as the case might be, at midday. From the time of our arrival at the camp we had soup made from water and turnips during fully five months. After evening roll call we received 300 grams of bread, although its weight was usually considerably diminished by the time it reached the prisoner. On Mondays and Saturdays, 300 to 400 grams of cheese were distributed. It was some sort of a crude home-made, peasant cheese which often contained more worms than cheese. Rations further included 1/2 kilo of margarine for twelve persons, distributed every Tuesday, Thursday, or Friday, and blood sausage or red sausage on Wednesdays and Mondays. These rations represented approximately 300 to 400 grams. In addition to margarine on Tuesdays and Fridays we also received a spoonful of marmelade per person. Since the barrel, however, bore a label stating that the marmelade was destined for the camp, its quality was correspondingly bad. Theoretically, the above are the rations each inmate received but, practically, a good part of them were stolen before they were actually distributed. In the evening, tea or coffee was distributed with the bread. The soup had to be licked up, as most of the prisoners did not possess spoons. I forgot to mention that we had to eat our food squatting on our haunches as a punishment by the room eldest to us newcomers for having crowded around the soup kettle during distribution.

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After our meal we were sent to the identification service where photographs from three different angles were taken. So on that day the camp picture gallery was increased by 60 more criminals! One by one we were called up, and I noticed that my comrades came out of the photographer's room looking frightened. Beware! It was my turn. I was seated on a chair and photographed. When I tried to get up, the floor started moving and, losing my balance, I was thrown against the wall. It was a practical joke played by the photographers, (all of whom are Poles) in setting the revolving platform in motion when one got up. It was not surprising that they sometimes had to have some kind of amusement even at the expense of their camp comrades. We then returned to our quarters and by that time the roll call was again due. So ended our second day in camp; and the next morning we were to be marched off to work with all the other inmates.

All the prisoners had to work except the sick, those in "quarantine," and those confined to their cells. The total camp strength was divided into camp commandos or squads which were each headed by a "Capo," or leader, and several foremen. At the head of large working units was a "Chief Capo" who was assisted by several "Capos" and foremen. The size of one of these squads varied from one to several hundred men. Although the Capo was really in charge, a foreman often took over a group of ten, twenty, or thirty workmen. The head of the labor administration chose the "Capos," with the consent of the "Chief Capo," the prisoners being assigned to squads by the central administration. Work started after the morning roll call, i.e. in summer from 5 a.m. to 12 m. and 1 p.m. to 6 p.m., in winter from 7 a.m. to 3 p.m. without interruption. There were workshops for craftsmen, farmers, industrial workers, and various technical trades. Many, particularly those in favor, worked in the camp administration. The camp was provided with an "infirmary," a "canteen," a laundry, a bakery, and a slaughter house. Thus prisoners with certain technical training could, in principle, work in their own trades. Intellectuals, liberal professional men, shop keepers, or office workers were the worst off and they represented fully 70 percent of the total number of prisoners. The latter were all employed as unskilled labor in the worst and hardest jobs, such as the coal and gravel pits. The mortality among them was frightfully high. But it seemed to be the aim of the camp administration to kill them off as rapidly as possible.

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II. MY FIRST DAYS IN CAMP - THE "INFIRMARY"

My first job was with a demolition squad. Since the area surrounding the camp of AUSCHWITZ had been evacuated for a radius of almost 100 kilometers, all buildings, unless taken over by the camp, had to be torn down. Even new buildings were demolished. Our work consisted in tearing down such houses and was exceedingly strenuous, particularly since we were expected to work at top speed. A squad consisting of 50 men was supposed to demolish a large building within three to four days; and we were instructed to salvage all building material. The roof of a house, for instance, had to be carefully taken down and all planks, beams, tiles, etc., stacked away. Nothing was to be broken; in fact, the slightest damage to anything resulted in an immediate and severe beating with a shovel or pick handle. The walls had to be broken down literally by hand, brick by brick, the cement sticking to each brick being afterwards removed and the bricks piled neatly up. Even the foundations had to be torn out and the ground afterwards levelled so that no trace of the house remained. Many men died at this work, not only from exposure and the strain, but from falling walls and beams - especially those who were elderly or slow. From the 50 who set out in the morning seldom more than 40 returned on their own legs. The remainder were either brought as corpses or in a state of complete collapse in wheelbarrows or on boards. These poor souls still were expected to appear at evening roll call, after which they were taken to the infirmary. From my working comrades who went there I never saw one alive again.

My work with this squad lasted over a month. I was then transferred to the ditch-digging squad. Trenches of from 2 1/2 to 3 meters deep had to be dug, and for the last 50 centimeters we worked standing in water. We were, of course, not allowed to leave the trench during work, and this job was considered as one of the hardest in the camp. Many died at it daily. Some time later I was shifted to the "concrete squad" where I had to heave heavy posts and sacks of cement; but after the arrival of new prisoners I was detailed to the making of concrete bricks. This had the advantage of at least being work under a roof, which was very important inasmuch as work went on regardless of the weather.

In addition, the prisoners were continually mistreated and struck by commando leaders, Capos, and foremen. In general, anyone holding a commanding position in the camp liked to give special emphasis to his position of superiority. Naturally, the character of the person concerned played a considerable role; but the fundamental rule was the direct responsibility of the superior

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for his inferiors, each individual being in turn responsible to the collectivity.

These circumstances fostered the "stool pigeon" system. For example, one day a working comrade discovered a few pieces of turnip which he carefully hid. He continued his work but, from time to time, took surreptitious bites off his treasure. Another prisoner having "squealed" on him, the Capo arrived a few minutes later. It must be remembered that the Capo is absolute master of his commando, and that everybody tries to get into his good graces. Unfortunately, this favor often had to be attained to the detriment of the well-being or sometimes even of the lives of other prisoners. The Capo proceeded to search our comrade and, finding the pieces of turnip, knocked the weakened man to the ground, hitting him brutally about the head and face and in the stomach. He then ordered him to sit up, hands outstretched in front of him on the ground with a weight of bricks on each hand; the pieces of turnip were stuck in his mouth. All the men were then assembled and informed that the unfortunate man was to stay in this position for a whole hour. We were warned that this punishment would befall any member of the commando who committed a similar "offense." The condemned man underwent this ordeal guarded by one of the foremen, very eager to fulfill his task to the satisfaction of the Capo, so that he hit our friend every time he tried to shift his position slightly. After 15 to 20 minutes the man became unconscious, but a bucket of water was poured over him and he was again forced into his original position. After he had slumped over senseless for a second time, his body was thrown aside and nobody was allowed to pay further attention to him. After roll call that evening he was taken to the "infirmary" where he died two days later.

Or another example: on Easter Monday, 1942 the weather was extremely bad with a heavy snowfall. We were sitting in the mud scraping cement off bricks, frozen half stiff. Suddenly the Commando Chief appeared and barked the following order: "Discard caps, coats and jackets!" Sick with fear for what might follow, we obeyed and continued working in our shirt sleeves. The Capo sneered at us: "You dirty Poles, now you can celebrate!" A young prisoner, not more than 16 years old, had hidden in a trench. He was terribly thin and so trembling with the cold that he evidently did not hear the order. Or perhaps he didn't care whether he heard it or not. The Capo, however, had meanwhile staggered off (he was half drunk) since he didn't intend to remain out-of-doors in this wretched weather. As a matter of fact, he cared very little about the prisoners; the sooner they died, the better. The snow had stopped falling, but in the cold wind we froze in our shirt sleeves; certain death awaited us. Nobody knew when the Capo might come back, perhaps in a moment,

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perhaps in a week, or in a month. While we waited, the snow started to fall again. A few foremen came running in our direction from a stove around which they had been sitting, to see how we are getting on with our work. One of them discovered the hidden youngster and shouted: "All your clothes off, at once, you swine!" As the kid did not react, the foreman pounced on him and started beating him: "Undress or I will beat the life out of you or, better still, I will report you to the chief." At that moment the Capo arrived. A sharp blow of a whistle: "Fall in!" We formed our columns and knew that it meant "sticking together." We were led into an open space where we sank ankle-deep in mud. Now the "sport" started. "Down! Up! Quick march! etc." We literally rolled in the mud. "Flatten out! Jump! Run! Hands out front!" We were covered with mud from head to foot and scarcely able to stand. The "exercise" had now been going on for about half an hour. To finish we had to do "push up" exercises, alternately lying down flat and supporting our bodies on our hands. "Up, Down, Up, Down!" The Chief of the Commando inspected the rows and saw an old man who was unable to continue. Immediately an SS guard threw himself upon him and kicked him in the head and face with heavy hob-nailed boots. When at last the poor old man gave no further sign of life, he was left alone. We were then allowed to stand up and continue with our work. The badly injured man was carried over to a dry spot among piles of bricks. He opened his eyes, tried to say something but couldn't utter a word; and we had to leave him as in the meantime the order was given to resume work. The result was that at the end of the day we carried home another corpse. But we had grown used to it. We marched and sang jolly German songs, as the Capo wanted it to be so. The Commando Chief walked alongside the group; he grinned: "You do sing well!"

During my work in the "concrete squad" I caught pneumonia (as was found out later). At the beginning I avoided the "infirmary" and hoped I would get over it. I knew too well what happened there and that seldom one left the place alive. But I became so weak that I could hardly move, and finally had to give in. I became completely indifferent. In one way I was lucky that my friends in the "infirmary" took care of me so that I was then able to enjoy "privileged" conditions. When I entered the "Krankenbau" it was composed of three different buildings: Block 28 - internal illnesses -, Block 20 - infectious illnesses -, Block 21 - surgery. Later on three new "blocks" (Blocks 19, 9, and 10) were attached to the "infirmary." They composed the so-called "Hygiene Institute." Here, sterilizing by X-ray treatment, artificial insemination of women, as well as experiments on blood transfusions were carried on. Male and female prisoners, especially Jews, served as "guinea pigs" for these experiments. This "block" was completely isolated from the rest of the camp so that news from it reached us only very seldom.

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It was not easy to be admitted to the "infirmary," as the "minimum" symptom was a fever of from 38.6 to 39 degrees (C). Light cases of fever were not admitted. All applications for transfer to the "infirmary" had to be submitted to the chief of one's own "block," who had the right to reject any such request. Then the sick person had to wait for hours in the courtyard of the "infirmary" before being called in for preliminary examination. If the doctor (a prisoner) considered him worth treating, he had to undress and usually take a cold bath before being presented to the German doctor, after further long hours of waiting. The sick were classified into two groups, "Aryans" and Jews. These groups were again subdivided into further groups, of which the first included the sick who were to remain in hospital, being considered "curable." The second consisted of extremely run down patients, chronic cases, and the half-starving or mutilated whose recovery could only be effected by a long stay in the hospital. This group was practically condemned to death by phenol injections in the heart region. Racial considerations played an important role. An "Aryan" really had to be seriously ill to be condemned to death by injection, whereas 80 to 90 percent of the Jews "hospitalized" there were "eliminated" in this manner. Many of them knew about this method and applied for admission as so-called "suicide candidates," not having the courage to throw themselves on to the high tension wires.

This situation lasted during the whole of 1942 until the time the mass extermination of interned Jews at AUSCHWITZ began. Danger of death by injection did not only threaten the newly-arrived hospital cases or casualties. From time to time (usually once a month) the German doctor used to effect a minute control of all the sick. In each ward an attendant (usually a doctor) had to "present" each patient and give full account of his illness. If the patient's stay happened to have exceeded a month, or if he were very weak, he was listed. The German doctor always kept the sick records of the condemned so as to avoid any attempt at interference on the part of the prisoners themselves. Each such special check-up by the German doctor usually resulted in a list of 200 to 400 men condemned to death, while the "normal" death list of the daily routine inspection varied from 20 to 80. The injections were given on the same day. The new patients who were booked for the "syringe" (as it was called in the camp jargon) received no clothes and had to remain waiting in the corridor - naked. They were then led from Block 28 to Block 20 where the "operation" took place in a special room. An SS man by the name of KLER, a shoemaker by profession, gave the injections. He had taken up this post in the hospital as a simple SS private, but was later promoted to SS-"group leader," although practically a moron. He also

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received supplementary food rations and was awarded the Iron Cross. There were days when this psychopath picked out victims from the wards on his own initiative, without instructions from the German doctor, on whom to practice his "technique." He was a complete sadist, torturing his victims with animal-like brutality before putting them to death. Later it was decided that his nerves had been strained by "overwork" so an "assistant" was recruited, a Polish volunteer, by the name of PANSZCZYK, No. 607 from Cracow, who was transferred to Germany during the winter of 1942 where he presumably died. The injections were then sporadically administered by "Sanitätsdienstgehilfen," or given by the chief of the "infirmary." For a certain time, another Pole named JERZY SZYMKOWIAK, No. 15490, "functioned" voluntarily; he died in the summer of 1943.

The injections were not only administered to the weak and ill, but also to prisoners in the political section who were condemned to death. Apart from this, on one occasion, two groups (the first composed of 40, the second of 80 prisoners) of young and strong youths between the ages of 13 and 16 years were put to death, on the ground that they were "orphans" and could not be considered in the camp as full-fledged workers.

In the autumn of 1942 came the massacre of the LUBLIN transports which caused great unrest in the camp. One of the sanitary service attendants refused to administer injections, stating that he was an SS man and not a murderer of children. Another attendant had to be summoned to carry out the job. This affair caused a lot of talk and stir as at least 15,000 to 20,000 people lost their lives and even BERLIN asked for an explanation of the high mortality rate in the hospital. The head-doctor, WIRTZ, disclaimed all knowledge of such events and laid the blame on the camp doctor whose name was ENTREST, a German from the POSEN district. A mock inquiry was held at which witnesses from the hospital administration had to testify and the lists of the "deceased" were checked. As "punishment" the camp doctor was simply transferred in the same capacity to the "BUNA." As a result of all this, murdering by means of injections stopped for a while, although it was resumed on a smaller scale soon afterwards for hopelessly sick cases. Many of those condemned to the "syringe" were used as experimental material in the "Hygiene Institute" (Block 10). The injections doubtlessly frightened the prisoners from asking to be admitted to the hospital.

Another major danger in the camp was "delousing," as it was euphemistically called. The whole camp obviously was covered with lice and fleas and large disinfection programs were carried out. However, the results were never apparent and our "washing" always came back almost as full of lice. Actually, the "delousing" was

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designed to combat typhus epidemics which had become a real plague at the camp. During these actions everybody was examined and those with bad complexions or in weakened bodily condition were, according to the camp doctor's mood, destined to be gassed. They were simply led to the "infirmary" from where 40 to 50 percent were "evacuated." A "delousing" action which took a particularly large toll in victims was conducted in July, 1942. During the course of this "purge" the weak, those ill with typhus or in post-typhus quarantine, were all sent to BRZINSKI without exception. This method was considered the most radical for eliminating typhus. The way in which those condemned to the gas chambers were transferred to their doom was exceptionally brutal and inhuman. Serious cases from the surgical ward who still had their bandages on, and a procession of exhausted and horribly emaciated patients, even convalescents on the road to recovery, were loaded on to trucks. They were all naked and the spectacle was dreadful in the extreme. The trucks pulled up at the entrance of the block and the unfortunate victims were simply thrown or piled on by the attendants (I frequently witnessed such tragic transports). A hundred people were often jammed into a small truck. They all knew exactly what their fate was to be. The large majority remained completely apathetic while others, mostly patients from the surgery with bloody and gaping wounds or frightful sores, struggled frantically. All around the trucks SS men milled about like madmen, beating back the howling crowd trying to lean out. Every time it was a terrible experience to have to drag our friends to the truck. Most of them were quiet and bid us farewell, but never forgot to remind us: "Do not forget revenge." Under such conditions men's hearts turn to stone. Imagine a prisoner's killing his brother in one of the wards so as to avoid his having to undergo the dreadful trip by truck. (I happen to know the names and immatriculation numbers of these two particular prisoners). It can well be imagined that we just shrugged our shoulders when told the German fairy tales regarding the KATYN incident.

III. THE JEWS

Originally, the camp of AUSCHWITZ was intended only for Poles. It was guarded by a group of Germans (no more than 30 at the beginning) who had been transferred from a German concentration camp. They were prisoners as well but "camp veterans," if such an expression may be used. Most of them had been imprisoned as far back as 1934 and were all more or less professional criminals. But as time went on AUSCHWITZ became more and more of an international camp and the first Jews started to arrive in 1941. They were immediately separated from the "Aryans" and quartered in special "blocks." Although at the time systematic executions were

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not an established rule, it can be stated that as a result of bad treatment by SS men, Capos and foremen (the majority of German origin but often Poles who were enlisted by force), a Jew - irrespective of his physical condition - could not last more than two weeks. A young Jew, for instance, who was robust enough to be able to do his work "on the double" (for example pushing a heavily laden wheelbarrow) would most probably be unable to keep it up in the long run. If he should show signs of holding out, he would inevitably be killed sooner or later by such mistreatment as being beaten with a shovel or pick handle.

In those days all the Jews had to work in the "quarry squad." At a trot they had to bring gravel on wheelbarrows from a pit about 15 to 20 meters deep up a steep slope. At the top, SS men and Capos checked their work and the speed at which it was carried out, and anyone considered as "loafing" was simply pushed over backwards when he arrived at the top so that he crashed back down the incline with his fully laden barrow. This was one of the guards' favourite pastimes. Such treatment of Jewish prisoners prevailed from the time the first Jews arrived at the camp until the spring of 1942, when the first large transports of Jews (tens of thousands) began to arrive and the extermination campaign was getting underway. At first there were few Jews at the camp, most of them of Polish origin, who had been sent there along with other Poles. They were immediately separated from the latter. They had been arrested not as a consequence of their being Jewish, but for offenses directed against "the security of the German State." Only from the spring of 1942 on were they rounded up and exterminated "en masse" on racial grounds. Certain large scale preparations had to be made to receive these mass transports and a special concentration camp was opened at BIRKENAU (the Polish name of the village is RAJSKO). Administered by Germans and Poles, the camp was guarded by SS detachments. Conditions were appalling. The camp had no water, no drainage system, and not even the most elementary hygienic installations. The Jews remained in civilian clothes which were marked with red paint. Food was supposed to be distributed to them on a basis similar to that prevailing in AUSCHWITZ, but abuse was flagrant. It often happened that the inmates received nothing to eat for days and then only a small part of the rations they should have had. Altogether they were inhumanly treated. The slightest complaint was punishable by death.

The first large convoys arrived from France and Slovakia. Physically able men and women - those without children or the mothers of grownup children - were sent to the camp of BIRKENAU. The remainder, i.e. old or weak men, women with

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small children, and all those unfit for labour, were taken to the Birch Wood (BRZEZINKI) and killed by means of hydrocyanic gas. For this purpose special gassing barracks had been built there. These consisted of large halls, airtight, and provided with ventilators which could be opened or closed according to the need. Inside they were equipped so as to create the impression of bathing establishments. This was done to deceive the victims and make them more manageable. The executions took place as follows: each death convoy consisted of some 8 to 10 trucks packed with the "selectees;" the convoy was unguarded as the whole frightful drama took place on camp territory. A private car containing the camp doctor followed each truck convoy since it was compulsory for him to be present at these mass executions. On their arrival at the gassing establishment, which was surrounded by a double barbed wire fence, men, women, and children had to completely undress. Each of them was given a towel and a piece of soap. Then they were driven into the barrack until it was completely filled up. Everything was hermetically closed, and specially trained SS units threw hydrocyanic bombs through the ventilation openings. After about ten minutes the doors were opened, and a special squad composed exclusively of Jews had to clear away the bodies and prepare for a new group of "selectees." The crematoria had not yet been constructed, although there was a small one at AUSCHWITZ which, however, was not employed for burning these bodies. Mass graves were dug at that time into which the corpses were simply thrown. This continued into the autumn of 1942. By this time extermination by gas was being intensified and there was no more time even for such summary burial. Row upon row of bodies of murdered Jews, covered only by a thin layer of earth, were widely dispersed in the surrounding fields, causing the soil to become almost marshy through the putrefaction of the bodies. The smell emanating from these fields became intolerable. In the autumn of 1942 all that remained of the bodies had to be exhumed and the bones collected and burned in the crematoria (by that time four had been completed). An alternative was to gather the remains of the unfortunate victims into heaps, pour gasoline over them, and leave it to the flames to finish the tragedy. The immense quantity of human ashes thus collected was carted away in every direction to be scattered over the fields where these martyrs had found their last rest.

In the meantime, the crematoria had been finished and the number of arrivals was steadily increasing. Gassing and burning were carried out at record speed but the supply of corpses became so large that occasionally they had to resort to the old method of open air cremation. It is estimated that approximately 1 1/2 million Jews were exterminated in this manner. With the exception of the Polish Jews, the other Jews had no idea what was in store for them at AUSCHWITZ. We were told by Dutch and

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French Jews that the Germans had informed them that they were leaving their country to be transferred to Poland where everyone would be able to continue work in his own profession or, still better, where for each shop, concern, or factory seized by the Germans an equivalent source of livelihood would be put at their disposal. They were to take their whole fortunes with them and liquid cash for at least six weeks. This resulted in considerable amounts of money and valuables being brought to AUSCHWITZ (most of them by Dutch bankers and diamond merchants), most of which was stolen by the camp staff, SS men, and prisoners. The condemned Jews generally faced their fate calmly, although those arriving in 1943 had a clearer idea of what awaited them. The sporadic attempts at rebellion and mass escape, when the freight cars were unloaded upon arrival, were bloodily repelled. The special railway siding reserved for the convoys was surrounded by searchlight and machine gun posts. On one occasion these unfortunate people scored a small success. It must have been during September or October, 1943 after a transport of women had arrived. The accompanying SS men had ordered them to undress and were about to drive them into the gas chamber. This moment was always used by the guards as a good opportunity for looting, and rings and wrist watches were torn off women's fingers and arms. In the confusion resulting from one such attack, one woman managed to snatch the pistol of SS Groupleader SCHILLINGER and fire three shots at him. He was seriously wounded and died the next day. This gave the signal for the others to attack the executioners and their henchmen. One SS man had his nose torn off, another was scalped, but unfortunately none of the women was able to escape. Although an attempt was made to keep this incident secret, it resulted in an order's being issued whereby SS men were not allowed to remain in camp after 8 p.m.

The extermination of Jews continued relentlessly, although in the camp tension relaxed to a certain extent. The fate of those Jews admitted to the camp has been described in the sections of my report dealing with the gassing and killing of the ill by means of injections.

IV. EXECUTIONS

Until the summer of 1941 AUSCHWITZ was mainly a concentration camp in which no executions had taken place so far. The first executions came as a surprise for the majority of the camp's inmates. They began in the summer of 1941 when one evening after roll call, various numbers were called up (I well remember there were 18 men from Cracow alone). The men whose numbers had been called were ordered to the stock room, where they had to give up

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their clothes and were given old rags (a shirt and pants) in exchange. Then they were taken to the gravel pit and shot with pistols at point blank range. The other prisoners were not allowed to be present at the shooting, but the execution was so arranged that practically the whole camp could witness the proceedings. After the execution a special commando was designated to bury the bodies. This incident caused a great deal of unrest within the camp, as we had assumed until then that deportation to a concentration camp excluded the death penalty for offences against the security of the German State. From this day on executions were carried out at more or less regular intervals, the victims being called up on Tuesdays and Fridays. Later a special place of execution was set up within the camp's boundary, an open space between "Blocks 10 and 11" where executions took place generally in the morning.

The index cards of the condemned men were sent from the chief clerk's office to the respective "blocks" and in the morning, immediately after roll call, the numbers of the prisoners were called up by the "block recorder." If the index card bore the inscription "to report immediately after roll call" and the signature of the "recording clerk," it meant that the prisoner called up was to be shot. The "block recorder" assembled the victims and brought them over to the chief clerk's office. There the numbers, names, and dates of birth were checked again. Ordered into rows of five by the camp eldest and the block eldest (also prisoners), they were then marched to the place of execution. If the shooting was only to take place a few hours later, the men were locked up in cells. If the execution, however, was to be carried out at once they were taken first to the washhouse. They undressed and their numbers were marked on their thighs with indelible pencil. After these preparations, they were again lined up in fives and then sent out to the execution wall (first four men and then two at a time). The men were led out by the block eldest of "Block 11" or then by the Capo of the cell block (a Jew), who took hold of the hands of the condemned and dragged them out to the wall where he stood between the two. In the beginning the condemned were forced to kneel and bend their heads forward, but later they were usually shot standing. The executioners shot their victims in the back of the head with a short-barrelled rifle which made a muffled report.

After the execution the "body bearers" went into action and removed the corpses to a nearby stable where they were thrown on a heap of straw. The blood stains were removed and the emplacement prepared for the execution of two further victims. After the whole group had been liquidated, the bodies were kept in "Block 28" until the evening. At dusk all the bodies, including those of other prisoners deceased during the same day, were

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piled on to a big cart and pulled to the crematoria. Later, the corpses were also removed from the place of execution in coffins and, if a considerable number were involved, a truck was used for this purpose. These "death transports" always took place during hours of curfew, as the camp authorities wished to keep the executions as secret as possible, in which they were, however, not particularly successful.

As mentioned before, such executions started during the summer of 1941 and reached a peak in 1942 with the transfer of "disciplinary companies" from AUSCHWITZ to RAJSKO (BIRKENAU) towards the end of May, 1942. Together with a large group of "Muselmänner" ("Muselmann" was a term applied in camp jargon to convicts utterly exhausted by starvation or over work) many young and sturdy men were selected and drafted into these "disciplinary companies." They were all marked with a large red dot, as in these special groups the inmates were differentiated by red dots on their chests and backs for offences committed in civil life and by black circles for "crimes" committed in the camp itself. Such "companies" were made up of about 500 men of whom, every second day, 10 to 15 were shot. The rest of them had to work extremely hard and await their turn. At the same time mass executions started in AUSCHWITZ (middle of May, 1942). Once, twice, or three times a week, 40 to 60 men were simply picked out and shot. Restlessness increased in the camp, when by the middle of June the situation had not changed, to a point approaching open rebellion, especially after one mass execution which cost the lives of 120 prisoners. The camp administration apparently got wind of this and, during a roll call sometime in June, it was announced that executions would cease and the death penalty would be abolished. It was true that the prisoners reacted with deep distrust, but on the whole the news had a quieting effect on everybody. And, in fact, there was a pause of 1 to 1 1/2 months after which executions began again, although less often and only in small groups. This state of affairs continued until October, 1942 when one of the largest mass executions ever held took 247 victims, all Poles from the LUBLIN and PODHALA districts. Terror broke out in the camp as a result, although again many reacted with complete apathy. This ended a ghastly series of executions of prisoners who, upon arrival in the camp, were already condemned to death. But some of them had been in camp over a year without knowing that their fate was already sealed. If often happened, for instance, that a prisoner selected for execution would be lying ill in the hospital but, as the sentence had to be carried out, he received a deadly injection in his bed. The famous Polish actor Witold ZACHAREWICZ was murdered in this way.

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All this, of course, did not mean that October, 1942 saw the end of the execution of prisoners brought to AUSCHWITZ with death warrants already signed. Only the method underwent certain changes. In the early days, for instance, the Aryan prisoners had always been given numbers and then incorporated into the camp. Later a new method was evolved consisting in immediately dividing the newcomers into two groups: those condemned to death and those who were to remain as regular inmates. The first group was not alloted serial numbers but directly transferred from the "block leader's" central office to the cells in "Block 11." The executions took place there and the arrivals were either shot at once or a few days later. This procedure was adopted in an attempt to keep the whole matter secret, and executions were only carried out late at night. In addition, the camp inmates were led to believe that only "civilians" were submitted to this radical treatment (it must be stated that only a permanent camp inmate was considered a "prisoner," whereas newcomers, without numbers and who had not yet joined the ranks, were still designated as "civilians"). So as long as only "civilians" were executed the regular inmates were not particularly upset.

Executions of "prisoners," however, did not cease altogether. The camp administration was extremely severe regarding discipline and respect of camp rules. For the slightest omission one was marched off to the execution cells and, of course, never returned. Things became even worse when the political section (meaning the camp Gestapo) decided to take charge of the punishment of petty internal offences. The frequent result was that they decided questions of life and death according to their own judgment. Bribery became the order of the day. Among the "offences" for being locked up in the execution cells were: being "politically suspect" on the grounds of having contacted "civilians" in the camp, spreading political news or commenting on the German High Command's communiques, drunkenness, theft (foodstuffs, gold, precious stones), premeditated escape, etc. The death cells were always overcrowded and every now and then they had to be "evacuated." This took place as follows: the camp leader, chief of the political section, GRABNER by name, dashed in, accompanied by a number of SS men as drunk as himself. They went from cell to cell, taking down the particulars of each occupant's case, the reason for his punishment, etc. If the camp leader had a list of those condemned to death in hand, the prisoners could consider themselves lucky, inasmuch as it might not yet be their turn. But usually no notice was taken of such a list. What decided the individual prisoner's fate was mainly the impression he made on this gang of drunkards and the mood in which the camp leader happened to be. There was no question of considering the actual penalty. If the impression he made was not too unfavourable, the prisoner remained in his cell to await his execution at a later date unless he went to his death voluntarily. The whole

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inspection was accompanied by a great deal of vile language and brutal treatment. Usually 85 to 90 percent of the death cell occupants were "evacuated" and shot in front of the wall so that space was again available for new arrivals. The camp in general was, of course, never informed of this secret justice nor who were its victims. It is true that the relatives of the victims were duly informed, but the cause of death was always given as being "natural." An incredible amount of paper was wasted compiling fake records of illnesses, fever charts, etc., destined to justify each single death. Death announcements were telegraphed never more than at the rate of two a day so as not to arouse suspicion on the "outside." From the beginning the executions were carried out by a single man: first, by "Oberscharführer" PALITSCH, who was later sent to an officers' training center, and then by "Scharführer" STIWETZ, who still performs these duties. Executions of women were reported from AUSCHWITZ, but in small numbers. On the other hand, great numbers of people were shot after having been brought in by truck straight from freedom or from prisons. In two instances whole families were executed, parents together with their children. In one case, an infant a few months old ended his short life in the arms of his mother before the execution wall.

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